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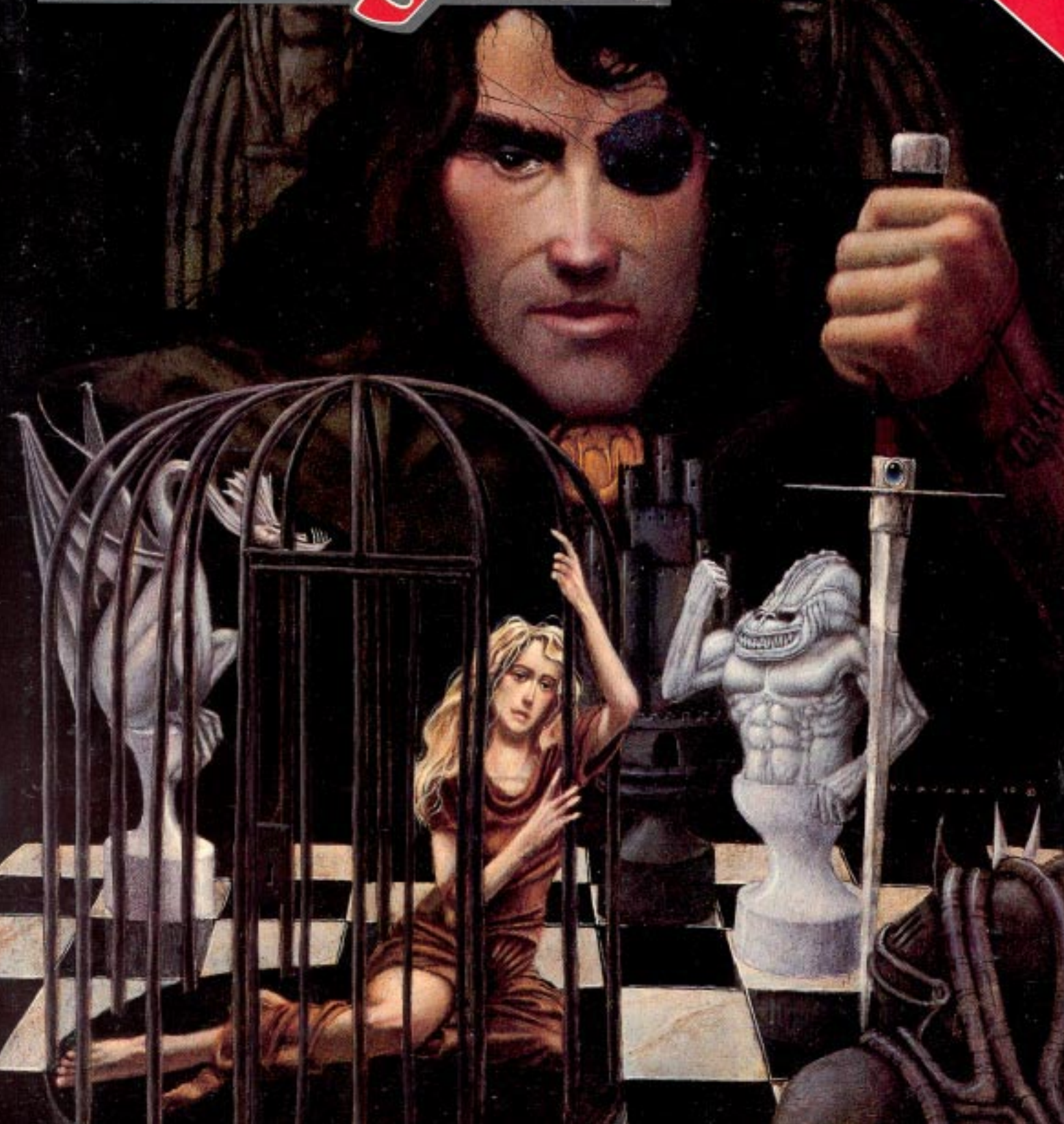
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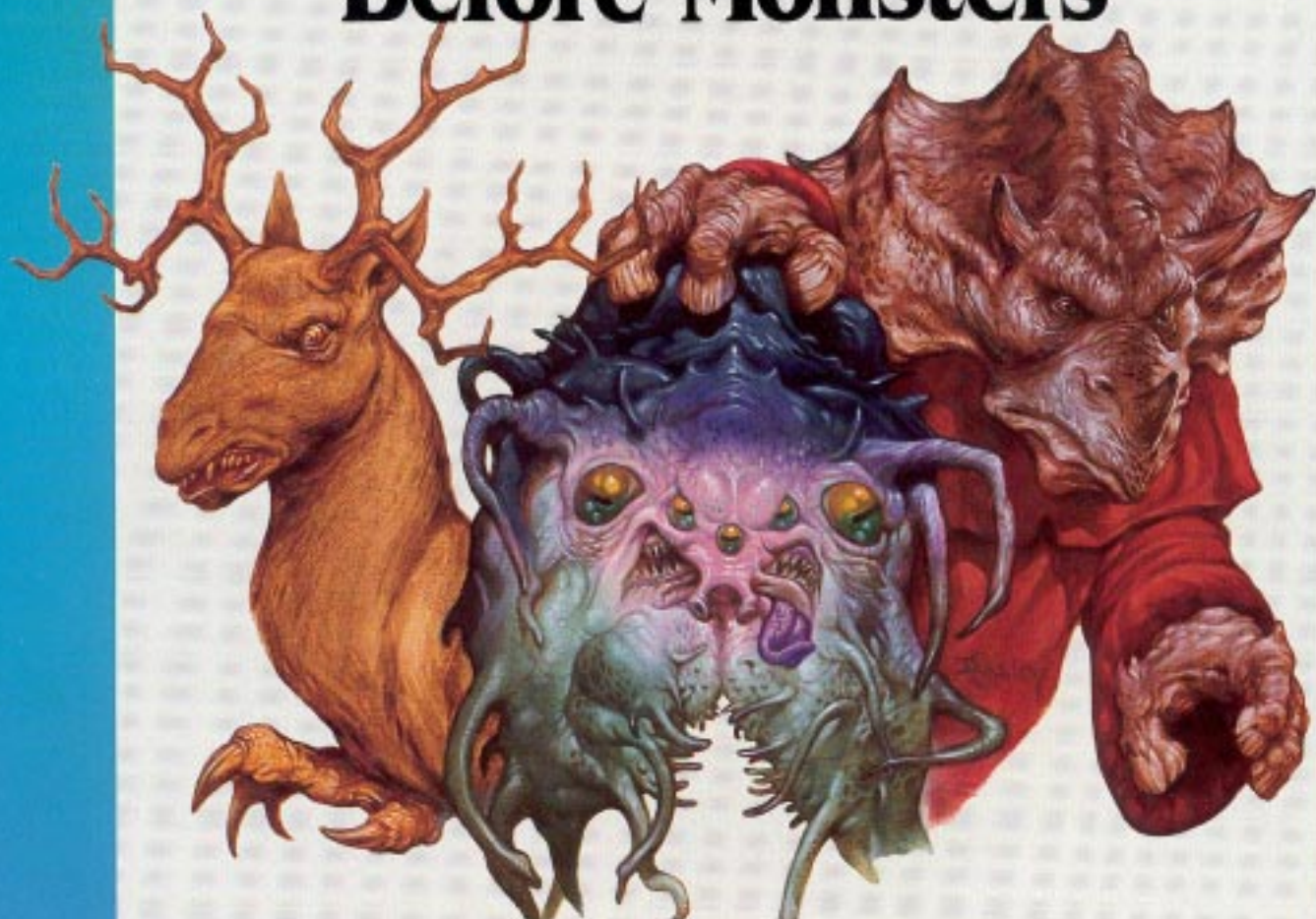
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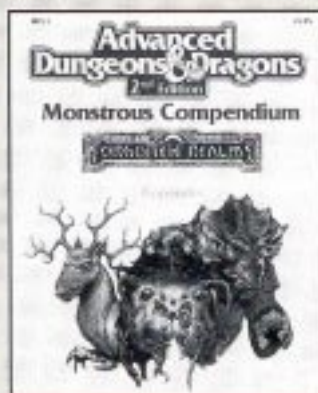




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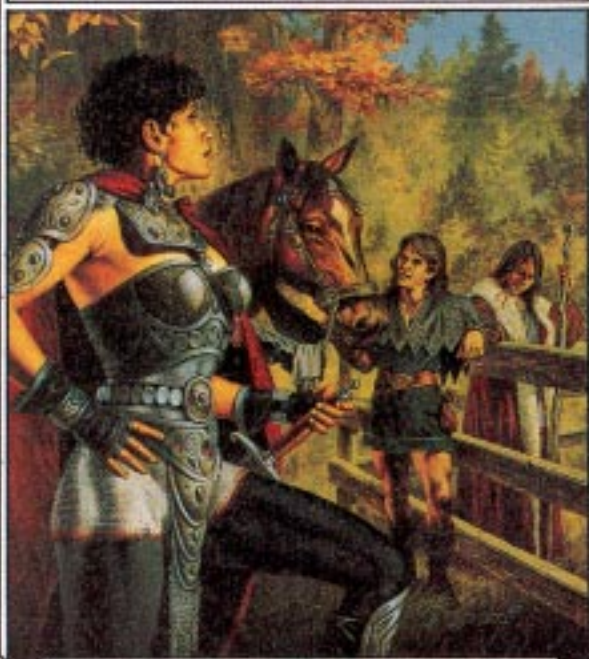
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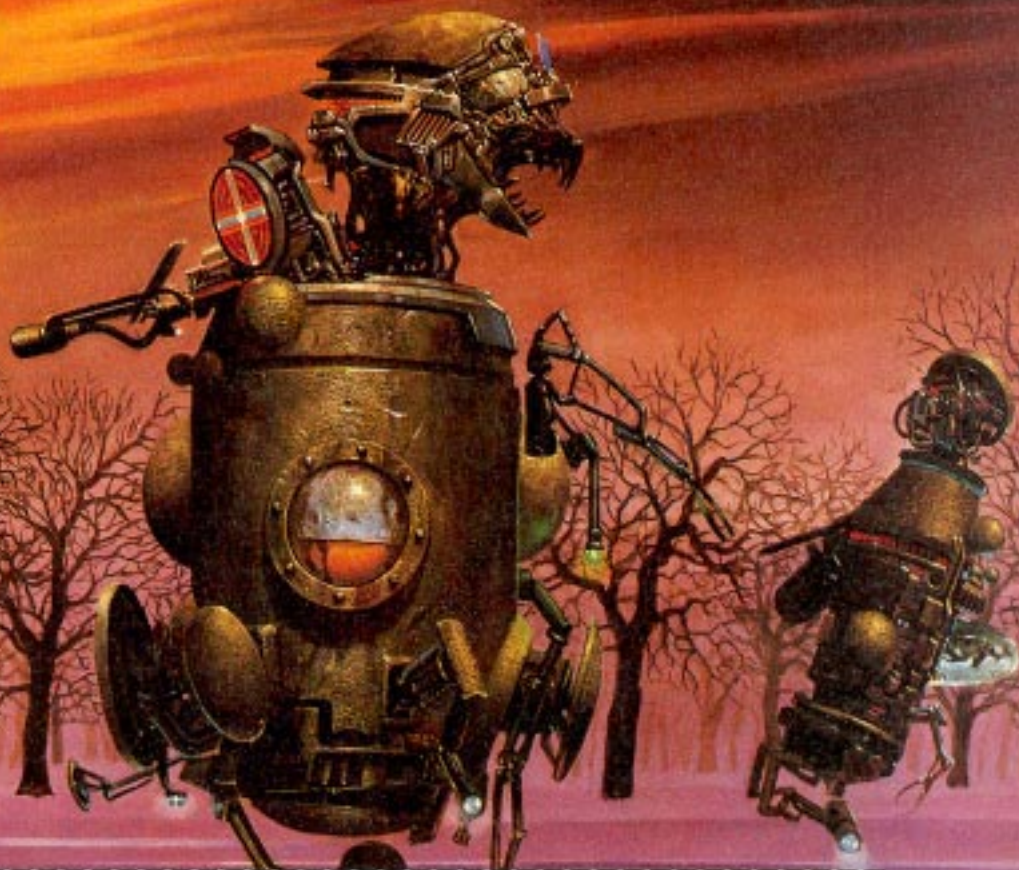


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COVER

This month's cover painting was originally part of a portfolio submitted by William Carman. We realized that this particular piece would be perfect for an issue on Dungeon Mastering, and we picked it up right away. In his letter, Mr. Carman said that he hoped the painting "looks good." It does. Thanks!

LETTERS

What did you think of this issue? Do you have a question about an article or have an idea for a new feature you'd like to see? In the United States and Canada, write to: Letters, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. In Europe, write to: Letters, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd., 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom.

DM's dilemma: Fee or free?

Dear Dragon,

I am writing about an idea that has been bouncing around in my head for some time. It is whether or not a DM should charge players for taking them through an adventure. I have heard that there are DMs who do just that. Many people are probably strongly against this, but there are some good reasons for doing so.

I would first like to comment against it in certain situations. For instance, if you have a regular gaming group in which players regularly take turns DMing, then by all means the games should be free.

However, if one person gets stuck DMing all the time, I see no reason why he shouldn't profit (although he never really will). The reason for this is that a lot of players don't seem to realize exactly how much work actually goes into preparing a dungeon. Untold hours of reading, planning, figuring, and preparation go into each adventure. People who have been a DM before know exactly what I mean. When I DM, I tend to go all out with maps, figures, etc., which cost quite a bit of money. This may sound ridiculous to some of you, but keep in mind that I am not referring to a regular group in which players take turns DMing. As of this time, I have spent over \$6,000 on AD&D® game items. I have taken people through over 200 dungeons, but I have actually gotten to play about 10 times.

Let me give you an example: You are preparing an adventure for 4-6 characters of levels 4-7. You come up with an interesting plot and spend about 30 hours preparing everything. You have drawn maps, purchased a few lead figures, bought graph paper, worked on pieces of parchment that you will hand out to players, and prepared a place to meet and play. Your regular group comes over, and you spend hours taking them through your creation. The players have a great time, and you are on top of the world. You hate to put your notes on a shelf somewhere, so you contemplate taking others through that dungeon, too. What would be so wrong with posting an index card at the local hobby shop, advertising your dungeon and charging \$2 or \$3 per person? DMing for a bunch of strangers and charging them seems pretty legitimate to me, not so much for profit as for easing the bite into one's wallet. Or what if you consistently DM the same group, doing all the work and never getting to play? I personally feel that every player should DM at least once; perhaps then a

middle ground could be reached.

Name and address
withheld by editor

I've withheld the writer's name because this topic is a very touchy one here at TSR, Inc. On a personal level, I strongly feel that being a DM is a labor of love. You do it because it's fun for you and your friends. If you feel like you are pouring too much time, money and effort into the game without getting a worthwhile return, you should cut back on what you put into your game; people can have a perfectly good time without loads of expensive little extras like special miniatures. (And \$6,000 is a lot of money!) DMing inexpensively does not mean producing a bad game, as marvelous games are run all the time using little more than the basic reference books and some dice and paper. If you have to put an adventure on the shelf, remember that you may have the chance to run it again with an entirely new group if you or your players move.

People play role-playing games because the game sessions are usually fun and free. Charging admission for a game puts it in a whole new light, one that might not serve you well in the long run. Is your game worth \$3 per session? Can you deal with the pressure of knowing that the players are going to expect their money's worth with each and every session? Will your campaign slowly head for the Monty Haul, out-of-control collapse that affects games in which players expect high returns and DMs feel obligated to dish them out? Do you have a money-back guarantee if the players have a game that they all dislike? What if some players like a session and some hate it? Will your players resent having to pay for their fun when it was once free? Will all your players leave you the moment that a "free" DM shows up in the neighborhood? If someone gives you \$10 instead of \$3 for a game, will you be more "fair" toward his character than the others? Don't forget that players are spending lots of their own money on gaming, too, purchasing miniatures, paints, paper, player's manuals, and the like.

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One of the best solutions I have to this problem is exactly the one you've developed: Have more than one DM in each gaming group, so that the responsibility (and costs) of DMing are shared. Other game masters can run completely different games, giving everyone a lot of variety in their recreation time. I also suggest having the players bring the munchies—chips, dip, soft drinks, pizza, hamburgers, egg rolls, ice cream, brownies, cookies, whatever. The DM's house

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EDITORIAL



Hey, now that's *kinky*!

One of the pet words that I use a lot around the office is "kinky." By "kinky" I don't mean anything that has to do with . . . um, you know—right. No, I mean bizarre, strange, wild in a way that catches your attention and makes you grin and say, "Yeah, that's great!" (No, I'm still not talking about *that*!).

Anyway, about kinky. Kinky stuff is hard to find, but it's out there. I love it, and when I find it, I print as much of it as I can. Sometimes other people have beaten me to it, but that's okay; there should always be enough kinky stuff to go around. Kinky stuff is also best when it's rare, not seen all the time. Kinky games that make the big time become the leaders in their fields and are much loved, but they lose some of their uniqueness with familiarity.

The following are three of the games in

the role-playing field that I consider to be both kinky and rare. Two of these games are currently "dead," and I recall them from my earliest days of gaming in the late 1970s; the third game is from Australia. Other games out there might be better produced, better designed, better selling, and so on, but for now, let's talk *kinky*.

BUNNIES & BURROWS* game (Fantasy Games Unlimited): Want to try a kinky game? This was a nice one, but good luck finding it now. You role-play a little rabbit—a smart rabbit, but a rabbit. You live in a warren with lots of other little rabbits, some of them being other player characters. Outside the warren is the Big Wide World, and somewhere in your little rabbit heart is the itch to go out and explore it.

Loosely based on Richard Adams's fantasy novel, *Watership Down*, the BUNNIES & BURROWS game presented character-class

and personal-abilities systems similar to those in the D&D® game, but distinctly rabbitish; it had Mavericks and Scouts instead of thieves, Seers and Empaths instead of clerics, Herbalists instead of wizards, Storytellers instead of bards, and so on. The society and customs of rabbit-kind are nicely detailed; rabbit-vs.-rabbit combat is even worked out. The encounter tables are filled with real-life predators: red-tailed hawks, bobcats, rattlesnakes, and humans. The game system has so many flavorful tidbits—like the rulings on how rabbits count, how many items a rabbit can hide in its fur, and how rabbits gamble—that you just want to hug it (and *that's* pretty kinky). Grenadier even produced marvelous lead figures for this game; Lord knows how much those are worth now as collectors' pieces.

And you know what? The darn thing

was playable. It worked great! I knew people who spat on it and screamed "Sacrilege!" because it wasn't derived from Tolkien, but if you wanted something really kinky to play, this was one of the games of choice. In most long-term campaigns I've heard of, the little bunnies began building siege towers, taking over farms, stealing handguns, attacking highway traffic, and getting into other adorable mischief. It was genuinely fun.

But FGU is long gone and the game is out of print—for the moment. Steve Jackson Games has expressed an interest in producing it, and time will tell if militant genius war-bunnies will again overrun the countryside. One can only hope. If you find this game at an auction or hobby-store sale, buy it. 'Nuff said.

METAMORPHOSIS ALPHA game (TSR, Inc.): This was the first science-fiction RPG ever published, dating from 1976. Your characters are primitive tribesmen, many of them mutants, who live in a strange world filled with arcane devices and hellish monsters. Bit by bit, you come to realize that your world is very limited in size, being 45 miles long by 20 miles wide. There are other flat worlds above and below yours, accessible by elevators and stairways. One day you put all the pieces together and discover the secret of your world: You live on a starship, poisoned by a radiation cloud and now lost in the depths of the galaxy.

Barbaric cultures on generation-travel starships have been seen a number of times in SF novels, such as Robert Heinlein's *Orphans of the Sky* and Brian Aldiss's *Starship* (released as *Non-Stop* in the U.K.), but this is the only time they have appeared as an RPG concept. The game had its flaws. The rule book was only 32 pages long and failed to provide any campaign goals beyond exploring the ship, getting better armor and weapons, and trying not to be eaten by mutant Venus' flytraps or shot by cougaroids. It had no details on how the heroes could gain control over the ship or interact with strange tribal societies, and the ship's internal details were sketchy indeed. But the concept was kinky as hell, and it provided some highly entertaining evenings of play for groups with imaginative and patient referees.

And it might come back, too. There is some discussion here about re-releasing this game as a boxed supplement for the upcoming 4th edition of the GAMMA WORLD® game (into which the METAMORPHOSIS ALPHA game finally metamorphosed in 1978). If you're interested and want to have your say about it, you can write to: James M. Ward, c/o TSR, Inc., P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. Here's proof again that you can't keep a kinky game down.

LACE & STEEL* game (The Australian Games Group): I had never heard of this system until I went to the 1988 GEN CON® game fair and saw a copy by accident. It's a swashbuckling fantasy-

adventure game set in Mittelmarch, a land much like Europe in the 1640s. It has courtly love, firearms, pirates, uniforms and clothing drawn straight from the *Three Musketeers* and the English Civil War—and it has fantasy character races such as centaurs, satyrs, harpies, and pixies (you can be a human, too). The game system uses dice rolls, draws from two included decks of combat and sorcery cards, and draws from a deck of tarot cards (not included). Role-playing is heavily emphasized. Best of all, the four rule books are loaded to the brim with artwork by Donna Barr that brings out the terrific romantic appeal of this system.

This game seems to violate a number of unwritten rules of fantasy RPG creation, and it gets away with it. Rather than avoiding gunpowder technology, it adopts it completely, with guns taking the place of bows and crossbows. Magical sciences include artificery, the production of magical machines and tools, as well as alchemy, astrology, necromancy, demonology, sorcery, and more. Combat can involve repartee (actually the exchange of nasty insults) as well as magic, rapiers, or cannon; the card-based systems are quite striking. And romantic encounters are played up to a level rarely seen in any role-playing game—kinky, indeed, given the relevant notes on satyrs and half-horses (centaurs).

I confess that I have never played this game, but that hardly matters. Just sitting down and reading through the rules and looking at the pictures is a treat. The Middle Ages look awfully dull after you've gotten lost in the land of Mittelmarch. For further information, write to: The Australian Games Group, P.O. Box 411, Blackburn 3130, Victoria, Australia.

Next month: I'll pick out a few other really kinky role-playing games near and dear to my heart, and chat a bit about adding a little kinkiness to your own RPG campaign. It can make all the difference between a predictable campaign—and a fun one.

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Roger B. Moore

Letters

Continued from page 5

need not be the only place people play, too, so some of the housekeeping chores can be spread out as well. Everyone can do something After all, it's only a game.

On a different topic, does anyone remember the second letter in issue #173, page 5? If so, read the following.

The final word

Dear Dragon,

I have had it with Waldorf and the 100 + level campaign. I'm stuffing a hammership with nilbogs and ramming Waldorf's castle. If I act fast, I can catch all of his demi-followers at the victory celebration. The nilbogs will convert all the damage they take into hit points and wipe out the survivors. The End (I hope!).

Douglas M. Burck
Boyd KY

Your plan worked perfectly Congratulations. Waldorf is officially dead! Ω



LOOKING FOR MORE GAMERS?

You may think you'd have to travel to another planet to find a game convention. Finding friends who are also gamers can be a problem, too. Put your scoutsuit away and turn to the Convention Calendar in this magazine. There may be a game convention closer to your home than you'd think—and conventions are a great place to find friends who share your interests. Whether you like board-games, role-playing games, miniature wargames, or just browsing around, a game convention can be all you've hoped for. Plan to attend one soon.

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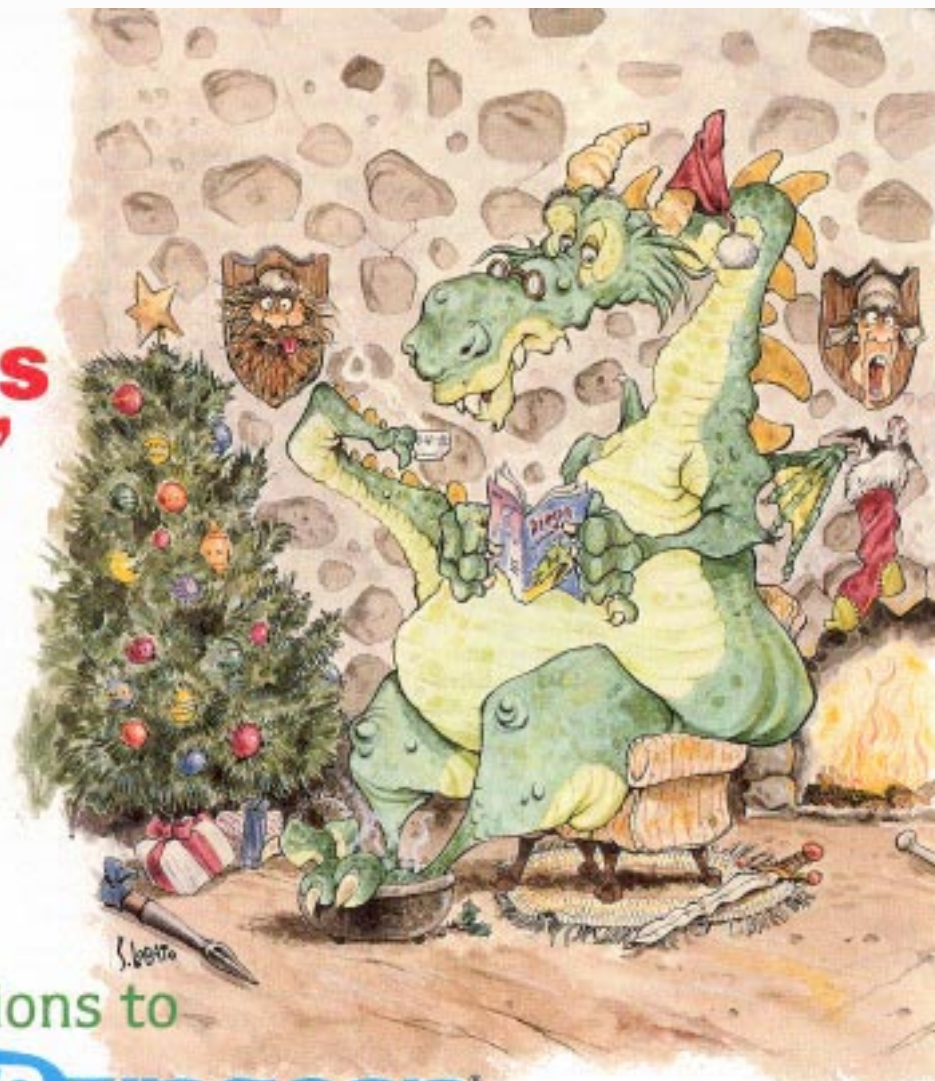
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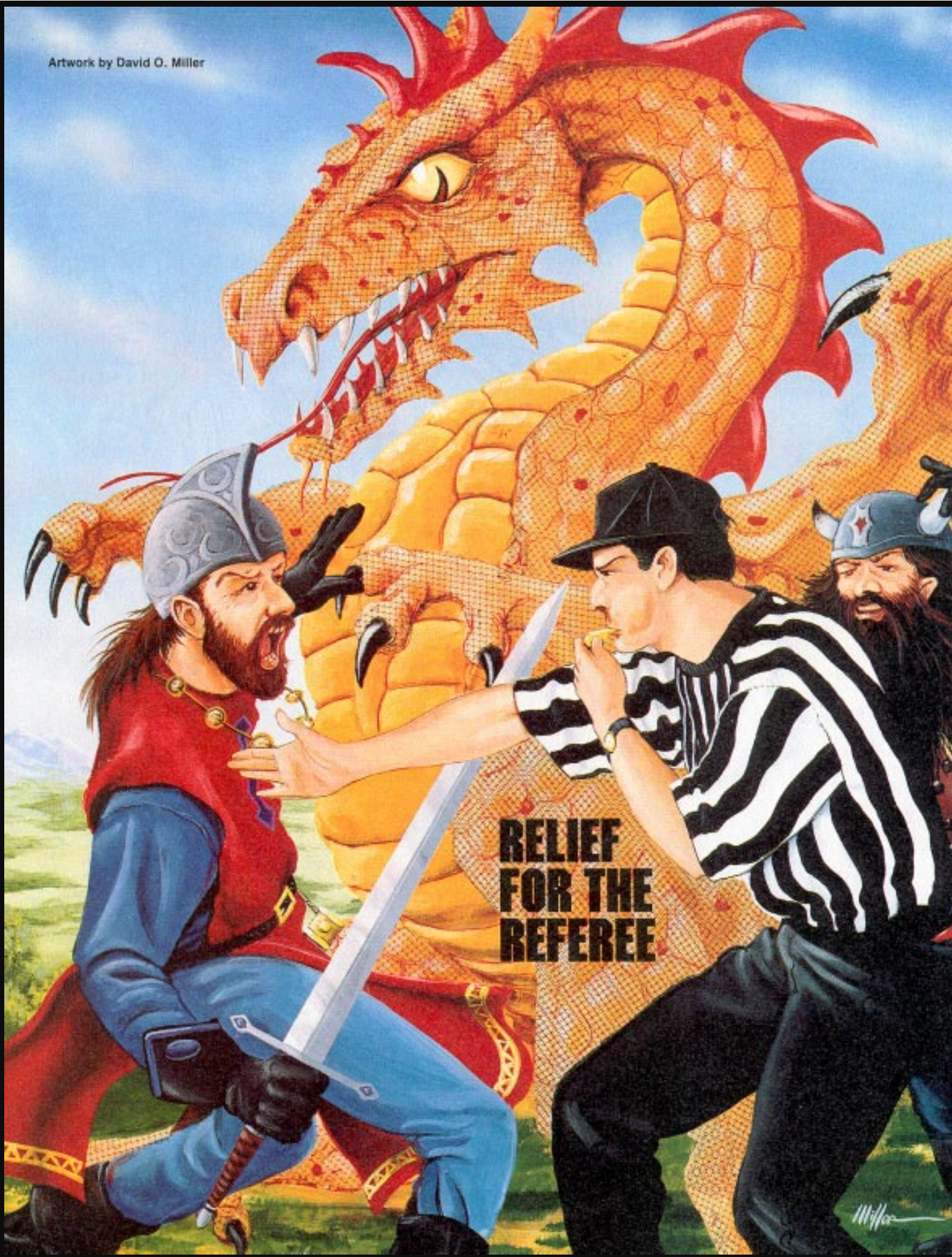
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Keeping the Party Going

DMs: Give your party a reason to adventure together

by Jim Shamlin

A party of adventure-seeking characters is about to set out to save a village from a tribe of bugbears that has been raiding local farms on a nightly basis. The heroes are sitting in a tavern and acquiring information, when Seagin, a half-elven bard, pipes up angrily, "Why should we save the town? They worship Greek gods, and I worship Dagda! I say we leave the heathen icon-worshippers to die!"

"Indeed," replies Hewitt, the human thief, "I could make more from robbing the bank than saving grimy peasants."

"Silence, you son of a rancid goat!" retorts Merlor, a human priest. "These are the worshipers of Athena, my brethren."

"No brethren of mine, they are," says Halfjammir, a human swordsman. "No son of Thor would allow his clansmen to be preyed upon by half-dogs."

"Half-what?" demands Thrack, the half-orc warrior.

"Do bugbears have spell books?" wonders the human mage Demlar.

The problem appearing here is one faced by every party at one time or another in the AD&D® or D&D® game: What common interests bind these individuals together? Aside from obvious racial incompatibilities, the problems of character-class interests and religious intolerance remain. What this and so many other parties lack is a long-term unifying force of motivation. A group might form as a matter of coincidence when each hero has his own per-

sonal reasons for undertaking a specific adventure, but the likelihood of the heroes' interests merging repeatedly is nil.

"But they all lust for adventure!?" is a common retort. This is a valid point, but what motivates them to seek this adventure together? After all, each could leave the party to join other groups with which they find themselves more comfortable. Indeed, though Merlor would be inclined to save the village, Hewitt might find an accomplice and rob the bank, getting the money to move to larger towns and rob larger banks, and Halfjammir might return to his band of warriors in the frozen north. Each would still be seeking the adventure he craves, but not with his present company.

Finding common motivation is the task of the Dungeon Master, who is already kept busy writing adventures and otherwise running the campaign. To prepare a list of separate motivations before each adventure would be an immense task, especially if the DM is to include *all* the characters in every adventure. This task would be much easier if the DM had planned for a means of common motivation at the onset of the campaign. The following are a few suggestions as to how the party can be unified from the start.

The deocentric party

The first and most obvious common grounds for adventuring is in the service of a particular church. The party will

obviously center around the cleric or druid whose authority stems from that of the group's deity. Fighters may be paladins, rangers, or sword-bearers who serve the interests of the religion. As for thieves and mages, perhaps the church is reforming them or their servitude is a penance for past transgressions; they might also be worshipers, if the religion allows it. Characters must either be of the party's religion or have strong reasons for serving the interests of the party's church (e.g., they belong to a related religion or have familial ties to another party member).

Adventures might focus upon finding holy relics, rescuing church personnel, protecting villages within the church's diocese, clearing grounds for a new church or religious settlement, or destroying enemies of the church.

The town party

This suggestion involves a number of adventures from a particular polity. The adventurers do what they do for their king or lord. The party leader may even be a town official of some sort. This setup is particularly fitting for knights and guardsmen, but with a little creativity any class can be motivated to participate. Clerics and monks may come from churches in the town, druids may live on the outskirts of the polity, fighters may be townsmen or guardsmen, mages can be town officials or citizens, and thieves may be merchants or guildsmen.

In addition to protecting the village itself, adventures might include dealing with dangerous outsiders, pioneering a new frontier, escorting nobles through dangerous wilderness, or working against a hostile neighboring empire. This covers the second half of the patriotic declaration, "For god and country do I fight!" The party's motivation is in the protection of its own homeland and the assets they have therein (home, business, and family).

The familial party

Distant kinsmen, including all bastards, gather at the funeral of a distant but immensely wealthy relative. In the will, the benefactor leaves a generous portion of his worldly goods (be it money, land, or title) to those who perform a given task. The leader may be a family matriarch, patriarch, or first-born child whose authority stems from control of the family's assets. This suggestion encompasses all character classes but only a select number of races—e.g., if the departed was human, then the party would be exclusively limited to humans, half-elves, and half-orcs (an interesting family gathering indeed!).

The task itself could include gathering various objects or parts of one object from the far corners of the multiverse, solving a riddle involving various adventures that provide clues to the final solution, or any of a number of campaigns in which each

enterprise is an inextricable portion of a given whole (perhaps the family assets must be retaken from enemy forces). It could also be a simple task that could have lasting aftereffects, such as stealing an artifact from a demon or a god. Better yet, the task itself could be abstract, including many things. For example, "secure peace in the uncivil west" could include destroying several nonhuman armies, seeking out monsters that would bring chaos, or venturing to a ruined temple to remove a curse on the land. Interesting things can happen once the task is completed, as the party argues over how the rewards are to be apportioned or if the benefactor returns to a powerful semi-life in order to claim a prize that the adventurers have foolishly earned for him!

The mercenary party

The heroes may have been employed or indentured into service by a powerful patron who sends them out to accomplish tasks and retrieve objects for him. This was the case of Fritz Leiber's heroes, Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser, who were sent after objects to please the wizards Ningauble and Sheelba, respectively. This can encompass any combination of adventurers. The party's leader acts as the voice of the master and may even be in his employ; the leader may be of any class, but this arrangement particularly lends

itself to the leadership of a fighter.

Each adventure may be undertaken to accomplish a specific goal, or the adventures may be steps along the way to accomplishing a greater goal. Such goals can include retrieving stolen items, stealing desired items, securing land, protecting operations, destroying the patron's enemies, or literally anything that the patron wants done to further his own ends.

The guild party

Members of a guild party are fellow members of a guild. Although the word "guild" calls to mind a group of thieves or assassins, other guilds might exist. There are also guilds of fighters and mages, but like the thieves' guild, they seem to lend themselves only to a certain class of characters. This is not at all necessary, as a thieves' guild can employ fighters and mages, a fighters' guild can employ wizards and thieves (as spies), etc. If it's the smart thing to do, it will often be done.

The leader of the party will be a direct representative of the guild and may outrank the other members. As for the others, they may be of any class, as long as their participation in the guild is justifiable. It is difficult to rationalize the participation of a cleric or a druid in many guild activities, but perhaps the religious figure is a member of a church who patronizes the guild, is allied to the guild, or is subjugated by the guild.

The focal point of the party's adventures will inevitably rely upon the interests of the patron organization. Guild competition will provide a wide variety of missions, such as overthrowing a rival guild, extending guild territory, or punishing uncooperative clients. The party may also be sent on missions to protect the guild and its territory from invading monsters or other organizations, or to rescue guild members from the clutches of monsters or the law.

The quest party

Members of a quest party have joined one another on their way to a particular goal. The leader of the party may be democratically appointed or may be a direct authority of the being or force that sent the group on its quest. The members of the party are unified by their desire to accomplish the goal, and they believe that the assistance of those in their group is necessary.

The quest itself may consist of any number of things, such as retrieving an artifact, rescuing a prince, destroying an evil temple, killing a particular band of orcs, or delivering a message. Each character may even have a different but interrelated quest. For example, one hero might have to steal the magical dagger owned by the king of the goblins, another might have to free the prince the goblin king holds captive, and another must slay the goblin king himself. Conflicts can arise when two members have the same goal, such as retrieving the same item for a different

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patron, but the DM can work around this by providing a unique motivation for each character.

One problem may arise: What will keep the party together after the adventure is completed? Perhaps it will be sent on further missions, the original mission might not be entirely successful, or the goal they have accomplished is simply the first step in accomplishing a higher goal. If their first mission failed, they might flee together as renegades from the patron, which will work only if the heroes were not magically indentured or the patron was not a supernatural entity.

The clan party

This party is composed of members of a clan who are, most probably, of the same race (or highly compatible ones). They were united by their people to further the needs of their particular clan or race. Such needs can include guarding the clanhold from an approaching force, attacking an enemy clan, retrieving a sacred item, clearing land for a new polity, or acting as ambassadors for a questionable new ally.

If composed of nonhumans, a racially homogenous party may limit the classes available to its members. The AD&D 2nd Edition game's *Player's Handbook*, page 20-23 discusses class availabilities for character races.

The chance-meeting party

This party is, by far, the most common; unfortunately, it is also the most difficult to keep coherent. Its leader is typically one who is democratically chosen but whose authority is often questioned by the other members. The members can be of any class, race, or alignment, but too great a variety will cause conflicts that will damage the party's unity. For example, a dwarf will not feel comfortable in the company of elves and half-orcs, a barbarian won't tolerate the company of a wizard, and if you have dwarves and half-orcs, forget it. The DM must take care to ensure a certain degree of compatibility between the characters without creating a boring homogeneity of classes that could be an obstacle to the party's success.

More importantly, each character must have a reason to remain in the company of the others once the first adventure is done. One cannot simply assume that the characters will logically stick together simply because they like one another or that they like one another at all. The characters must each form a strong bond of comradeship with the others. They must have a sense that they are an essential part of an integrated whole whose members must rely upon one another to obtain successes that they could not have managed alone.

One way to do this is to weave a pattern of amiability. Although character A may

not like character B, he may get along with character C, who likes both characters A and B. Perhaps at the end of the first adventure, they may find their way to the next, and since they worked so well together in the past, they will stick together in the future.

The scope of adventures available to the chance-meeting party is both wide and narrow at once. It is wide in that literally any adventure is possible, but narrow in that all must be willing to undertake the adventure. For example: Most of the party may want to raid an ancient tomb, but the cleric and paladin respect the god to whom the tomb is dedicated and will not enter. Entry by the others may draw outright attack from these two. Even if it doesn't, how will a fighter, two thieves, and a mage fare against three wights? They will eventually run out of healing or, more importantly, life-energy levels. Designing adventures for the chance-meeting party must be done with each and every character in mind.

A party may remain coherent on the basis of any one of these reasons, or a combination of two or more. Other unifying factors may be employed in place of or in addition to any of the above, depending on the campaign. The important thing is that each member of the party be personally motivated to ensure the completion of each adventure. Ω

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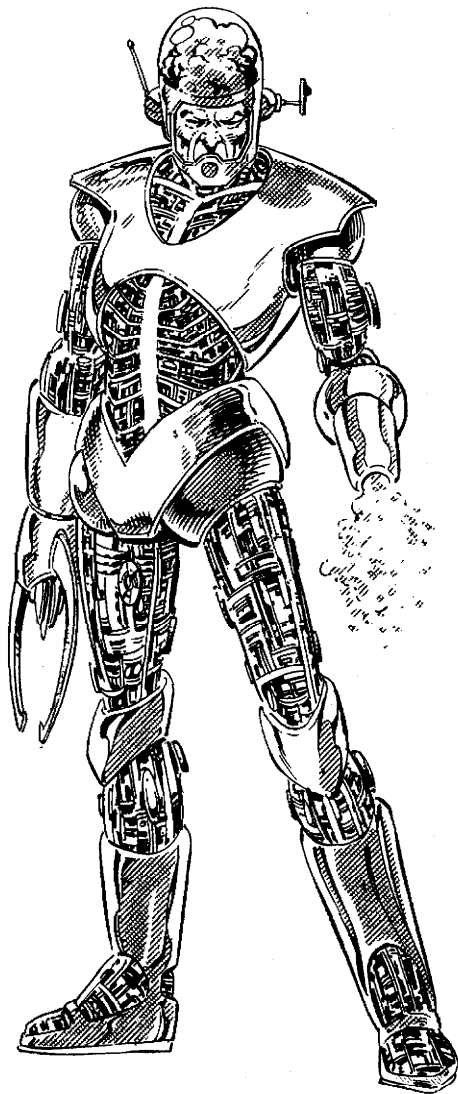
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Technology and inventions in a magical universe

by Thomas M. Kane

"There will be spies," Windwood fanned the smoke away with excitement, hiding the traces of their work. She heard her grandmother scraping the ashes of the fire onto an old skin. "Other tribes will send spies and thieves and crafty traders who would give us anything to know how we have done it."

"Yes, but we will not tell them," said her grandmother. "This find is for our tribe alone. The others will discover it soon enough." Windwood looked back and saw She-Who-Knows-Rocks scatter the burning ashes—all of them—into the stream, where they hissed for a moment, then drifted away, cold and black.

"You forgot—" Windwood started, then caught herself. "Oh, it doesn't matter now, does it? You don't need to save any ashes for later." Windwood watched the ashes disappear. "We will never be cold again, or at the mercy of the bears and tigers."

"That is so," said her grandmother. "That is the beauty of the stone. Chip off another piece, now that we know we've succeeded." She-Who-Knows-Rocks watched her granddaughter shatter the flint, casting dark splinters across the lighter stones. "We think this is wonderful. But by the time your sons have sons, it will mean nothing to them. They will never have worked a tinder drill or searched the forests after a thunderbolt. To them, fire will be as common as sunlight or water."

Clever scientists and bold inventors can be just as important in fantasy games as they are in espionage or science-fiction role-playing games. They may even be more so, since even the most primitive machinery is a marvel of technology in a primitive world. Any true adventurers will certainly solve mysteries, explore frontiers, and spy out secrets for the sake of science. Player characters (PCs) themselves may devise the machinery that changes society. In a primitive world, every field lies open to inventors.



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Materials

To invent something, one must have materials from which to make it—and new substances were among the first things mankind discovered.

The first material to create a new technology was jade. It could be carved more easily than any other stone, and it was hard, capable of holding an edge. The Chinese honored their greatest god by naming him “The August Personage In Jade,” and some Mayan tribes found this stone so satisfactory that they never adopted metal even after discovering the latter. However, metals can be fused, cast, and remelted for recycling, and they are far easier to find than jade; most peoples quickly adopted copper and bronze. The few tribes that could forge iron were regarded as magicians, and they quickly overran their neighbors.

Almost every resource has been treasured. For centuries, the Chinese emperors spread lies and legislated punishments to keep any foreigner from learning that silk came from worms. Wool may not be so romantic, but in the 18th century, a royal writ of permission was still required to export a merino sheep from Spain. Secret societies in medieval Venice launched great conspiracies to steal and protect their secrets of glassblowing. In the AD&D® or D&D® game, fine glassware will be even more valuable because it is essential to alchemy.

Fantasy worlds have many other substances to develop. A clever dwarf might learn to smelt aluminum and make remarkably light, rust-free armor and weapons. Tiny amounts of aluminum actually were synthesized almost 200 years ago, but the metal was so rare that people used it in state jewelry. Napoleon III recognized aluminum’s potential and offered a reward to anyone who developed a cheap way to smelt it, but no practical process was developed until 1886. Plastic might also appear in game worlds. Polyethylene, for example, can be made by heating ethylene (found in petroleum) under pressure with oxygen and peroxides. Furthermore, platinum, already a part of most AD&D game worlds, was unknown before 1735. This gives DMs an opportunity to develop interesting campaign backgrounds. Perhaps some great metallurgist recently discovered platinum, and for some reason it was adopted as money.

Agriculture

No invention can be as important as a new source of food. Early in history, cities and government became possible only when people learned to farm, which meant they could live in one place instead of roaming vast plains looking for fresh pasture. The tribes that continued their old herding practices became the Mongols, Huns, and other raiders, who recklessly pillaged the tame farming peoples.

The next major change in foodstuffs came when explorers discovered potatoes

in the New World. Potatoes were cheap, nutritious, and easy to grow. They became so popular that some peoples (such as the Irish) came to base their whole diets around them, leading to terrible famines when the potato crops failed. PCs who develop marvelous new foods may not like the results.

Weapons and strategy

The greatest generals have all been discoverers—not necessarily of mechanical weapons, but of fresh strategies and whole new ways to fight. For example, when Rome fought Greece, the Greeks would march to a clear plain and form spear phalanxes, a system that had crushed all the world’s armies under Alexander the Great. The phalanx was still invincible, but it did not hinder Rome’s legions. Instead of fighting, the Romans avoided the phalanxes and marched into the Greek cities, which were unguarded because all their warriors had gone to preappointed battlefields. The Romans had discovered that the city was even more essential to Greek power than the Greek army, and this is what they attacked.

The BATTLESYSTEM™ game and other miniatures systems allow players to exercise this sort of genius. A war game must be bound by preplanned victory conditions. Any victory conditions based on the Greek objectives would award points only for defeating enemy armies; therefore, the Romans could not win using their real-life tactics. If the game took historical events into account and made cities the key objective, whoever played Greece would have already read the rule book and seen the folly of leaving towns empty. However, in a role-playing game that does not appoint an artificial winner, the victory conditions can be shaped by the combatants and their resources. Neither side can be sure of how to win until the battle has ended.

New weapons can also be invented, and they might have vast effects on strategy. For the effects of the stirrup on horsed combat, see DRAGON® issue #113, “A Saddle’s Not Enough.” When armored horsemen became invincible, the whole system of knighthood and serfdom developed to support an elite cavalry. Long bows and pikes ended feudalism altogether. The Russians developed an even more novel way to defeat cavalry; they called it the *goligorod*, which was later perfected by Zizka, leader of the Hussites. The Hussites linked armored wagons together, forming instant fortresses wherever they needed them.

Graceful, multidecked sailing ships were developed primarily as ways to carry more cannon. The fact that they also made seafaring convenient enough to colonize new continents was incidental—but of immeasurable importance. New missile weapons have always made entrenched defenders stronger, freezing wars into a contest of sieges and stalemates.

The use of new ways to feed armies

often has the most effect of all on strategy. Logistics govern the movement of troops and, hence, every strategy involving maneuvers. If food could be magically created, incredible feats of marching would become possible.

Scientific inventions

Peaceful inventions need not all be machinery, either. Thinkers who devise mathematical processes and philosophies also can create adventures. Emperor Ordinance of China (described in “Lords of the Warring States,” in DRAGON issue #167) ensured his rule by establishing a standard set of weights and measures. Once physical things could be objectively measured, the Emperor’s governors and overseers could no longer develop pleasing estimates of their performance by measuring rice yields in “dishes,” that might be any size, or territory explored in “paces.” They had to tell the Emperor exactly what had been accomplished.

The same emperor also abolished China’s unreadable picture-writing and replaced it with a simpler set of standard pictograms, a course of action recommended by a certain hermit scholar. Legend has it that this system worked so well that the emperor summoned the hermit to his court for a reward. Instead of coming, the hermit denounced the emperor as a tyrant for forcing one alphabet on a whole continent. Palace guards were sent to behead the scholar, but he turned into a bird and flew away.

Mathematical formulas are essential to all science, and their process has often been as colorful as any other invention. In Babylon, nobles invented algebra as a sort of game that common people could not understand. The ancient Greek mathematicians often tried to apply their philosophies to politics as well, and they felt that their intellectual talents qualified them to judge criminals, lead nations, and found new religions (a notion that led to the stoning of at least one philosopher). Certainly, magicians of a fantasy world could have similar adventures.

Gadgets

Many inventions are likely to be impractical things, like sunglasses for chickens, pig-powered garbage disposals, and combination toothpick/cheese-slicer/claw-hammers. Gamers who want examples of bizarre magical gadgets should consult the D&D game supplement, AC11 *The Book of Wondrous Inventions*.

Historically, Leonardo da Vinci planned many such devices, including an ornithopter (an aircraft using flapping wings), a helicopter that used a large screw instead of a rotor, automatic-fire crossbows that were operated by men walking a treadmill, and a round iron structure on wheels, with cannon mounted around its circumference, that he hoped would take the place of the war elephant.

Earlier than Leonardo, in the 1500s,

knights invented the “forbidden gauntlet.” This was an iron glove with a lock that fit around a sword hilt. When it was fastened, the sword could not fall from one’s grip. This might be especially useful in games that include critical-hit/critical-fumble tables. Even in the AD&D game, it makes any disarming attack ineffective and might also be useful against flinds or other monsters that can disarm their foes. Assume that it takes one complete round to insert the sword into a “forbidden gauntlet” and another complete round to remove it.

Fashions and vices can also inspire odd inventions. Ancient Egyptian nobles prized tiny animal figurines that could grind malachite into a paste; the paste reduced the sun’s glare when spread around the eyes. A wide variety of little boxes were developed for snuff, and tobacco led to a huge number of pipes and lighters. The customs of a fantasy world could lead to magical gadgets, possibly using illusions or minor spells to enliven ordinary habits.

Characters as inventors

PCs frequently want to invent new devices themselves. The DM must decide if the PCs can; the results are often fairest when he simply makes a ruling, instead of relying on game mechanics. Sometimes it is obvious when a PC can or cannot invent something. When the party is trying to lower chests of gold down a mountain cliff, and one player has his character make a crude pulley from a tree stump and a rope, it should work. The PC might have to make an open-doors roll to avoid dropping the chest anyway, but the rope can certainly be draped over the stump.

At other times, PCs want to invent things that **might** work. The DM should ask players to describe exactly how their characters plan to make the thing they wish to create, using materials available in the game world. If the idea involves some scientific principle that the DM thinks would be unknown in a fantasy world, the players can be asked to explain why their characters thought of it.

When the DM resolves inventing by reasoning instead of dice rolls, it shows the players exactly why their characters can or cannot do something. For example, many players think that their characters can invent gunpowder and thereby gain a modern arsenal of firearms. If a PC actually tries to do this and can justify why his character thought of mixing sulfur, charcoal, and saltpeter, he still needs to find them. Charcoal may come from fires, but sulfur must be purchased from an alchemist or perhaps gathered at a volcano. Many players give up when they try to find saltpeter. Actually, this material was quite common in the Middle Ages because of its use as a flux for molten metal. Saltpeter was extracted from certain earths or scraped off the walls of basements and tunnels. This is a convenient time for the PCs to learn some campaign history and

smith’s lore.

Once the PC has made gunpowder, he still has to use it. Remember that it took hundreds of years for bombards to replace catapults, and over 1,000 years for handguns to supplant swords. Unless the player is an expert on primitive gunsmithing, he will probably not be able to suggest anything more advanced than putting the gunpowder in a tube with some projectiles, sealing one end, and lighting the powder. Such a homemade cannon is far more likely to explode than fire normally; even if it works and somehow hits something, it will not be nearly as powerful as an arrow. Over time, gunpowder has been refined, fashioned into assorted shapes of grain, rubbed into fuses, and made smokeless. Guns have also undergone countless changes, and no medieval smith could reproduce the complex firing mechanism of a modern pistol, much less a machine gun. It was much harder to defeat recoil and heat than to invent the gun itself.

At some point, the DM might need to use random rolls to determine an invention’s effects—and side effects. Ability checks, where the PC rolls 1d20 and attempts to score below some ability score, can resolve most questions. The character who invents gunpowder may need to make a dexterity check to escape an exploding cannon, and an attack roll (with penalties for nonproficiency and the gun’s basic inaccuracy) to aim it. He might also need an intelligence check to make some minor improvement, such as designing a tube that is less likely to backfire. These game mechanics keep the story going. Once the player has role-played the whole invention process, he can see what the dice rolls simulate.

Time line

The following time line shows the general time when certain items, both significant and trivial, were invented in the real world. Naturally, this thread of technological progress need not follow the same course in a fantasy world. Magic might make certain inventions useless, thus preventing research that would have eventually led to more powerful devices. Furthermore, different societies develop in different ways. This can enliven many adventures when the PCs visit lands where some of their possessions seem primitive while others are regarded as marvels of technology.

6000s B.C.: Humans begin to farm crops and tame animals.

5000s B.C.: Copper and bronze are discovered, and most hand-to-hand weapons come into use. Shields, walled cities, battering rams, donkey-drawn chariots, and scale armor appear.

5000s B.C.: Potter’s wheels develop in Egypt. They are not used elsewhere until well after 2000 B.C.

3000s B.C.: Kingdoms with cities and formal laws are founded.

3000s B.C.: Most pagan myths develop, replacing nature cults. In a fantasy world where mythological gods are real, this is the time when the immortals first noticed humanity.

3000s B.C.: Pictographic writing develops, used by priests to keep track of debts people owed the temples. The priesthood also begins minting money and loaning it, although both of these functions are later transferred to secular kings.

3000s B.C.: Cotton clothing is invented in the Middle East.

3000s B.C.: Bricks are invented in the Middle East.

3000s B.C.: Oared galley-ships appear.

3000s B.C.: Gold, jewelry, and rare sea shells become valuable because they are used in supposedly magical amulets. In a fantasy world, this represents the dawn of sorcery. At this stage, the only claim most “magicians” make for their art is that tokens could create an event that they symbolized. A golden bull bestowed a bull’s strength, and oblations of water created rain.

2900s B.C.: The Egyptians reconcile their lunar calendar with the solar year. They also develop sundials and water clocks.

2500s B.C.: Mathematical geometry formulas are directly applied to engineering, allowing buildings to be far more complex.

2500s B.C.: Horses are tamed in western Asia.

2000s B.C.: The earliest known books on medicine are written.

2000s B.C.: “Magic” progresses, and magicians claim to be able to create their own incantations as substitutes for actual tokens. Runes, inscriptions, and chants take the place of amulets, and people began to place curses on things they wish to protect.

1000s B.C.: The Phoenicians develop rams for galley combat.

1000s B.C.: Astronomical patterns are mathematically codified in Egypt.

1000s B.C.: Greeks develop splint mail and most forms of catapults and siege engines.

600s B.C.: Iron is in general use in Europe. As well as its obvious use in weapons, iron allows farmers to use plows instead of hoes, making each farm far more productive.

500s B.C.: Greek fire is used by Eastern Europeans.

320 B.C.: Chin (the state that eventually unified China) imitates the Mongols by organizing a cavalry of soldiers on horseback instead of in chariots. This leads to the invention of trousers, which allow horsemen to sit comfortably astride their mounts.

300s B.C.: According to tradition, Alexander the Great explores the ocean floor in a glass diving bell.

300s B.C.: Heron of Alexandria invents steam engines and gear trains, although he uses them only for toys.

300s **B.C.**: Eratosthenes of Alexandria measures the circumference of the Earth by observing shadows in different towns at noon.

200s **B.C.**: Weights and measures are standardized in many empires (at least officially).

200s **B.C.**: Archimedes invents many principles and devices, including an irrigation pump and his famous method of testing the king's golden crown to see if the royal goldsmith had embezzled some of the materials (the process involves submerging the crown to see how much water it displaces). In 287 B.C., a Roman soldier invading the city kills Archimedes, despite a general's explicit orders that the inventor be spared.

600 **B.C.**—500 **A.D.**: All modern, monotheistic religions are founded.

100s **A.D.**: The magnetic compass is invented by the Chinese.

100s **A.D.**: Gunpowder is invented by the Chinese.

800s **A.D.**: The Franks introduce chain mail for general use.

800s **A.D.**: Anglo-Saxons begin using bill hooks, starting the development of pole arms.

1300s **A.D.**: The English begin using long bows effectively.

1500s **A.D.**: Potatoes are brought from the New World to Europe.

1500s **A.D.**: Heavy crossbows, requiring mechanical devices to cock, are developed.

1608 **A.D.**: Several inventors around Europe simultaneously claim to have invented the telescope.

Many gamers like to experiment with letting medieval-fantasy PCs encounter technology like space ships and dynamite. Simpler inventions can be just as marvelous. A SCUBA mask imported by some time-machine usually becomes just another "magical" way to stage underwater adventures. Potentially tremendous effects can arise from a "simple" invention; the discovery of iron, for example, can change whole worlds. Conquerors will rise, miners will prosper, fabulous wealth will accumulate, and soon the whole campaign world will eventually alter as steel replaces bronze, wood, and flint. PCs can be involved in the whole affair—whether they want to be or not.

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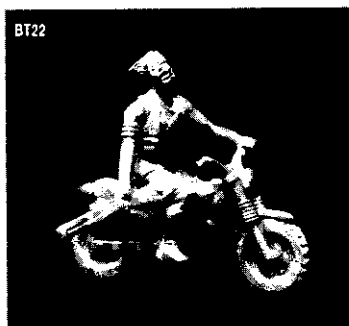
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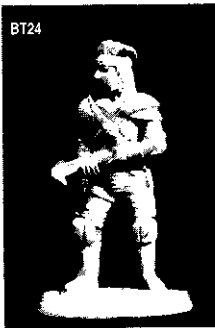
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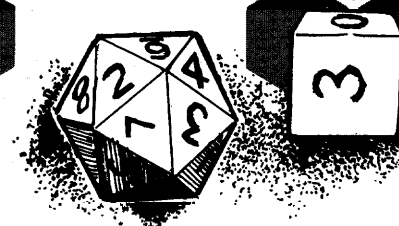


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Secrets of the Masters Revealed!



Apply fiction-writing techniques to game-campaign design

by Michael J. D'Alfonsi

As all Dungeon Masters know, writing exciting role-playing game adventures is one of the most difficult tasks for an aspiring DM. Creating a campaign is similar to writing a novel, so fiction writers like myself face the same challenges that DMs do. Trying to create intricate plots and memorable characters is the goal of both writers and DMs.

As a writer as well as an avid role-player, I have stumbled along trying to make both tasks easier. From talking to fellow writers and DMs, I have realized that colleagues in both groups have given me some advice that applies to both endeavors. By combining the knowledge and advice of both groups to my writing and my campaign, I have become more skilled at my vocation and my players have noted the improvements in my fantasy milieu.

A list of techniques follows that writers use in the practice of their craft, and how these same techniques can be used to make you a better DM.

Work habits

Being a DM, like being a writer, is more of a calling than a hobby or job. Both can be fun, challenging, stimulating, tedious, and frustrating—all at the same time!

Few people have the flexibility to schedule large blocks of time to devote to their campaigns. You must train your subconscious, which is where all those great ideas come from, to release its contents when you want to work. If you sit down at the same time and place every day, your subconscious will eventually get the idea and cooperate.

Start by setting aside one hour each day when you will work. Do it in the same place each day. If nothing comes to you right away, keep staring at your note pad or computer—even if you spend the hour staring. Your brain hates a vacuum. Once you train it, it will start releasing your creative brilliance on cue. To begin with, stop when that hour is up. Once you are set in your routine and you're having success, increase the time you spend "at work."

Another important thing to remember is that you must work on your campaign

every day. If you don't, you lose contact with your project. You will notice the improvement in your campaign by working on it every day.

Keep a journal

Every successful writer does this at one time or another; most do so for their entire career. A journal serves a number of purposes for the writer. First and foremost, a journal helps you keep track of your ideas. Ever had a great idea in the middle of doing something else, but forget to write it down and lose it forever? Every writer has been there, which is why most keep journals. It is also a good repository for what writers call "dump writing," anything occupying your mind at the time. Get rid of it in your journal and get down to work.

A journal can be a notebook, index cards, or a tape recorder. All you need is a convenient method of recording your ideas. I use a bound notebook for my main journal, but when I travel I keep index cards with me.

Finding ideas

Now that you know how to catch and store the ideas that happen upon you, here's how you can consciously look for them.

The major source of ideas for fiction writers is the newspaper. They clip articles out of the morning paper, store them in a journal, and go back through them when they need an idea. Why not do the same for a fantasy campaign?

Newspapers are filled with stories of kidnappings, robberies, murders, and even some positive accomplishments. Sure, a hostage situation in a fantasy world won't be met with gun-toting SWAT teams, but you can substitute an appropriate equivalent. The City of Greyhawk from the WORLD OF GREYHAWK® setting won't have a star baseball player like Nolan Ryan, but it might have a champion wrestler or gladiator.

Writers won't reproduce a real-life event point-for-point in their stories. They use the article as a starting point and build on it, creating an entirely different scenario. DMs can do exactly the same in their campaign worlds.

Creating characters

As in a novel, characters bring a campaign to life. Non-player characters are the most enjoyable aspect of a campaign for me, but creating such characters is hard. Entire books are written about fictional character creation, and every writer has at least one system that works.

When I'm writing fiction, I follow a checklist. I have recently started using the same list when creating game NPCs and when fleshing out my player characters. Ask these questions about the proposed character:

- What does the character want out of life?

- What is his function in the scheme of the story (campaign)?

- What does he look like?

- What is his lifestyle?

- What does he like and dislike?

- Does he have any distinguishing actions or verbal expressions?

- What does he do when he's angry or happy?

- Is he necessary to the overall picture of the story (campaign)?

- What are his talents and abilities?

- How often is this character going to appear in the story (campaign)?

- How involved will he become in things?

- Where has he been?

- What has he done?

- Should he be liked or disliked?

- Is he believable?

The AD&D® 2nd Edition game's DMG (pages 114-115) contains tables on character personality that will give you ideas for answers to some of the above questions.

Planning and organization

While a rare individual can prosper in the midst of chaos, most people can't. I find that when I let my work area get cluttered, I can't write. I become uneasy, and my creative process stops.

Keep your work area organized. Keep everything you need in easy reach. Graph paper, pencils, reference books, and all other materials should have their place. If you minimize your clutter, you maximize your output.

Plan ahead when working on a project. Individual ideas are only fragments or

"bones." You need at least a skeleton to work from. If you look through any of TSR's published campaigns, you can see that a lot of planning went into them; they have an overall consistency, and no elements are there without a reason. Plot lines all have a believable beginning, middle, and conclusion. These things can only come about through thorough planning.

Say you are writing an adventure where the characters have to escort a caravan. That is your starting point. Now you must fill in the details. What is the caravan carrying? What evil forces are trying to stop it? Do the caravan owners have ulterior motives? Hundreds of other details are needed to make a complete adventure; an idea isn't enough. You can brainstorm a list of supporting ideas or do a full outline, whichever works best for you.

One good way to outline, which works better for me than the traditional heading/subheading system, is the linear outline. Start with a line drawn from the bottom-left corner of the page to the top-right corner. With your first plot development, draw a line off the main line near the bottom. Write the development on this line. Any subplots related to this development are written on lines coming from this development line. Work your way up the main diagonal line with each new plot development. This system is not as rigid as the traditional outline and allows you to easily add things without rewriting the entire outline.

Research

The old saying goes, "Write what you know." The new, improved version states: "Know what you write." If you stick to only what you know, your avenues are limited. But, if you're willing to thoroughly research your subject area, you can write about virtually anything.

When researching a campaign setting, pay attention to the details. The things that are going to make your world seem real and alive are small things, like how chain mail was made in France as opposed to England, or what the Sumerians traded with India. You won't look good if you have an ancient Roman eating corn and drinking coffee, both of which were unknown to that culture. Remember: There is no surplus research. Every detail may come in handy at some point.

Editing and revision

Good editing is what separates the excellent from the mediocre. In submitting this article, I didn't sit down and reel off 3,000 words and then mail them in. I made a first draft, set it aside for a couple of days, went back and looked it over, and saw a lot of mistakes and changed them. I then wrote a second and third draft before I submitted the final copy *[which was accepted without major revisions.—The Editors]*.

DMs have to follow the process, too, and perhaps even more so. Writers can submit an inferior piece, get it rejected, and then

improve it (though that's not the recommended way to go about it). DMs enjoy no such luxury. If you use one of your adventures and it is a bust, you can't pretend it never happened, or your players will think you are crazy. Careful editing will help you get it right the first time.

Do not edit while you write. This, along with "you must write every day," are the two non-negotiable rules of writing. Nothing will bring on the dreaded writer's-block syndrome quicker than making corrections while you are still creating an adventure.

Writing is like a flowing stream of water. When it comes to a rock, it goes around. If it stops at the rock, everything behind it stops. If it goes around, the momentum of the flowing water will eventually make the stream go over or through the obstacle.

Once your "stream" stops, it is very hard to get it going again. You must get it on paper first, then go back and worry about clarity, continuity, and consistency (the three Cs). Editing is an entirely different process from writing. It uses an altogether different section of your brain. Let each part do its job in turn, and you will find yourself with a lot more completed projects than unfinished ones.

Tenacity vs. talent

I decided to become a professional writer one afternoon while browsing through my favorite bookstore. I ran into a woman who became my mentor. We talked about writing, and she gave me several pieces of advice, many of which I am sharing here. The single most important thing she said was that tenacity counts ten times as much as talent. You can be the most talented writer in the world, but if you don't have the tenacity to sit in front of a typewriter, day after day, you will never succeed. Former president Richard Nixon once said something similar: "All you need to be a great lawyer is a lead butt?"

As a DM, you must stick to what you are doing and finish what you start. You may be stressed, stuck, or afraid, but you have to do it anyway. I may not be the greatest writer ever, but I am possibly the most stubborn. Through all the rejection slips, I endure. I keep at it and refuse to give up.

Confidence is the key. You have to believe in yourself and in what you are doing with your campaign. It's all right to make mistakes, but you have to learn from them. Don't doubt your abilities. One adventure may end up as a Monty Haul jackpot, but you can remember that when you put your next adventure together. It is your choice to become a DM, and you have to take the bad with the good.

Dealing with writer's block

Writer's block is the night hag that inhabits every writer's (and DM's) nightmares. It can stop you in your tracks, even as you're entering the home stretch in creating an adventure or novel.

Being passive and trying to wait out a

block never works. Be active and do something about it. I have five ways that I combat this dreaded affliction, and I try them in order. If the first one doesn't work, I move on to the next one.

First, I read something inspirational. For me it is either *the Meditations*, by Marcus Aurelius, or the Bible. Both are chock full of advice on overcoming adversity. I might also read from a book of poetry, a good novel, or even something I have written in the past. Reading something almost always clears my head and lets me get back to work.

If this doesn't work, I change the setting and medium. I write on my computer, at my desk, from 9 A.M. to noon every day. If I'm blocked, I grab a notebook and go for a walk. I might go to a local park or to a cafe and try working through the block there. I rarely have to go beyond this point before my block is cleared.

On those rare occasions when I am still blocked, I put on some music and dance. I got this idea from an episode of the TV show, *L. A. Law*, and it really works.

If walking, reading, and dancing don't help, try a hot bath. The soothing effects of the hot water are great for breaking through any troubles.

Your last chance at returning to productivity is to switch projects. In general, it is a good idea to stick to one project at a time, but if your block is this serious, your subconscious is trying to tell you that you are not ready to work on what is in front of you. A writer told me that your mind knows when you are ready for something; when you are, nothing can stop you from putting it on paper. So, if nothing works, switch tracks and work on something else.

Communicating ideas

Being a writer and a DM are both lonely pursuits. You spend hours huddled with your books and notes trying to do something that other people might think is strange. You are apart from those people who don't share your love and obsession (and even those who do).

Take heart! Writers have writers' groups to share ideas, get honest and informed criticism, and to complain about the rigors of their chosen life; why shouldn't DMs? Get together with some of your friends who run campaigns. Swap your latest new magical item with the guy across town for his latest, most deadly monster. Find out how others deal with "rules lawyers." Your campaign will not only get an infusion of new ideas, but you will get a fresh perspective on your craft.

Before I started applying what I knew as a writer to campaign creation, my world had no internal consistency and the players constantly argued with me because of it. Now I can reap the rewards of both pursuits. I have a campaign that is organized, consistent, and no longer such a chore to run. Be patient, apply these techniques, and watch your campaign start to write itself.

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DEFEND YOURSELF!



Speed up AD&D® game combat with the THAC0 defense system

by Blake Mobley

DM: "Okay, all eight trolls rush forward and attack the party. Tim, what's Thayr's armor class?"

Tim: "One from the front, two shieldless, and six from behind."

DM: "Let's see—trolls bite and claw twice, so that's three attacks on Thayr's front armor class. What was it again?"

Tim: "One."

DM: "Right! *[Rolling, calculating, comparing with THAC0 chart, and rolling damage.]* He bites Thayr for eight hit points, then rakes him for five more with a nasty claw. Now, another troll is attacking Thayr from his right side. Is that his shieldless side?"

Tim: "Yeah."

DM: "I can't remember if his shield is magical or not. What did you say his shieldless armor class was?"

Tim: *[Irritated]* "Two!"

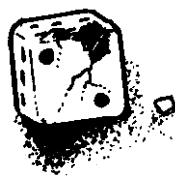
DM: "Oh, yeah. Sorry. *[Rolling and calculating.]* Amazingly, the troll missed with all three attacks. Thayr must have ducked at just the right moment. Well, that takes care of Thayr's attacker. Only six more trolls on the rest of the party, and it'll be the party's initiative."

Dale: "This takes so long, and I don't feel like my character has any control over his own life. You roll all attacks and damage behind the screen to maintain a sense of secrecy, but we all trust each other. I wish there was a better way to do this."

DM: "Me, too. Sometimes I just guess whether the attacks hit or miss in combats involving hordes of monsters with different THAC0s. The rolling and calculating takes too much time, even though this is one of the fastest combat systems I know."

If this seems like a common occurrence in your AD&D® or D&D® games, this is the article for you. Although the THAC0 system is a wonderfully quick method of combat resolution, it can be improved upon to give your game a more lively and realistic feel.

Wouldn't it be nice if a player character could somehow "defend himself?" This is possible if you allow each player to roll the attack dice of his PC's foes (the nonplayer characters, NPCs). The DM then secretly compares the roll to each NPC's THAC0 to quickly determine if the character was struck. This gives the player the illusion of being in control (unless he cheats, of course), keeps the NPC's chance to hit secret (at least initially), and frees up the DM so he doesn't have to remember so many armor classes or roll so many dice. The DM still rolls the damage on any NPC's successful attack, thus maintaining game balance. Obviously, this system is viable only if all the gamers trust one another—but if they do, this could help a lot.



The THAC0 defense

This system of combat resolution is fast, simple, and easy to adapt to your game. When the DM needs to resolve any NPC's attack on a PC, he simply informs the player which NPC is attacking him and in what manner.

Using the previous gaming example, the DM could say, "Tim, Thayr is being attacked by two trolls, one from his front and one from his right side. Each troll attempts a bite and two claw attacks. Thayr needs to defend himself, with the trolls' bites rolled first." Thayr then "defends" himself, while the DM watches or moves on to inform other players of their PCs' predicaments. A player resolves his character's defense as follows:

1. Roll 1d20.

2. Add the character's applicable armor class: front, shieldless, or rear. ("Adding"

here means that a positive armor-class value will increase the result and a negative armor-class value will decrease the result; e.g., a roll of $10 + AC 2 = 10 + 2 = 12$, while a roll of $10 + AC -2 = 10 - 2 = 8$.)

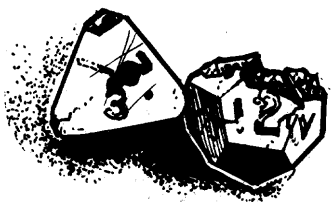
3. Perform the above two steps for all current attacks that the character is defending against, writing them down if necessary.

4. Inform the DM of the resulting defenses in the exact order rolled.

The DM should explain that the lower the player's roll is, the better the defense. This makes sense since, in essence, the players are now rolling the attack rolls of their PCs' foes (that's why a negative armor class reduces the defense roll).

The DM now has a very simple task. He compares the result to the foe's THAC0. Results below the THAC0 are unsuccessful attacks. Results equal to or greater than the THAC0 indicate that the foe hits the PC. The DM then rolls the appropriate damage.

Using the previous example, the DM has Tim roll Thayr's defenses. Tim rolls 15, 8, and 12 against the first troll and a 10, 1, and 5 against the second troll. Since the first troll was attacking from the front, Tim adds Thayr's front armor class (AC 1), producing 16, 9, and 13 ($15 + 1$, $8 + 1$, $12 + 1$, respectively). Since the second troll was attacking from Thayr's shieldless side, Tim would add Thayr's shieldless armor class (AC 2) to the second set, producing 12, 3, and 7 ($10 + 2$, $1 + 2$, $5 + 2$, respectively). The DM notes that trolls have a THAC0 of 13. Tim then says, "The front troll got 16, 9, and 13, while the other got 12, 3, and 7." Realizing that only the 16 and 13 of the first troll hit (because both are equal to or higher than the trolls THAC0), the DM rolls damage for one claw and one bite then informs Tim, "The first troll bites Thayr for eight hit points and rakes him for five more. Thayr deftly dances away from the other troll."



Benefits

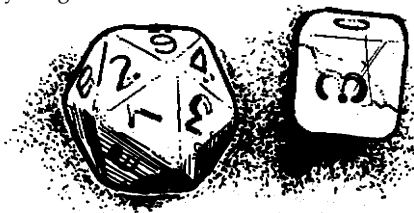
Close examination reveals that this process is doing nothing other than having the players roll all the foe's attacks upon their characters instead of having the DM doing it. Some might conclude that nothing is gained. This is far from the case, as shown by the following benefits.

Players feel as if they have a chance to avoid being hit, as they are "in control" of the dice (not actually true, again, unless the player cheats; open rolls with commonly used dice are recommended!). Players roll all the attack dice in the game, freeing the DM for other duties. Then, too, players are actively involved in this phase of combat, keeping the game alive in their eyes.

The DM need only hold the correct damage dice in his hand and remember each foe's THAC0 number. He then can instantly resolve damage as players report their defensive results. This instant feedback brings the game to life and allows the DM to weave interesting explanations as to why the attacks hit or miss, adding more realism to the game. When the characters

first encounter monster "X," they have no idea how hard it is to defend against the beast's attacks. However, as the players roll defenses, they eventually come to realize that a defense of, say, 12 or less avoids damage, just as a real warrior would soon learn to judge how well he had to dodge, block, and maneuver in order to avoid being struck by a real adversary.

Skilled players might even start role-playing the combat to a greater degree, making comments like, "Ah, Thayr dodges deftly to the left—ooh, but he is clobbered by a right hook!"



Applying the system

If a DM feels he can place a lot of trust in the players, he can allow all of them to roll their defenses simultaneously. Combat then moves quickly.

There are still some combat modifiers that the DM has to take into consideration, such as the +2 bonus for attacking from behind, the -4 penalty if a target is invisible, etc. DMs should handle all of these

adjustments themselves if the players are inexperienced or if the applicable modifier is something the character shouldn't know. For example, if a troll throws a club at Thayr from medium range, and Tim reports that Thayr's defense was an 13, the DM simply applies the -2 penalty associated with medium range and informs Tim that the club just missed.

Perhaps the best way to handle this last point is to lay down the explicit rule that players make no modifier adjustments unless the DM specifically says so, such as: "Tim, add two to Thayr's defenses against those rear attacks" This allows the DM to regulate modifiers as he wishes.

If you try this THAC0 defense system in your campaign, use it for several games, allowing the players to adjust to it. Then ask them how they feel about the change. Be sure to point out all the pros and cons from your standpoint; as well as listening to theirs. A good practice is to call for a secret vote as to whether the new method should be adopted.

In any event, I hope the THAC0 defense system improves the quality of your gaming. I have tested it for the past year in my own gaming club and have used it at the 1990 GEN CON® game fair, as well as the final round of the 1990 European GEN CON game fair open tournament. So far, nearly everyone finds it to be a dynamic improvement.

Ω

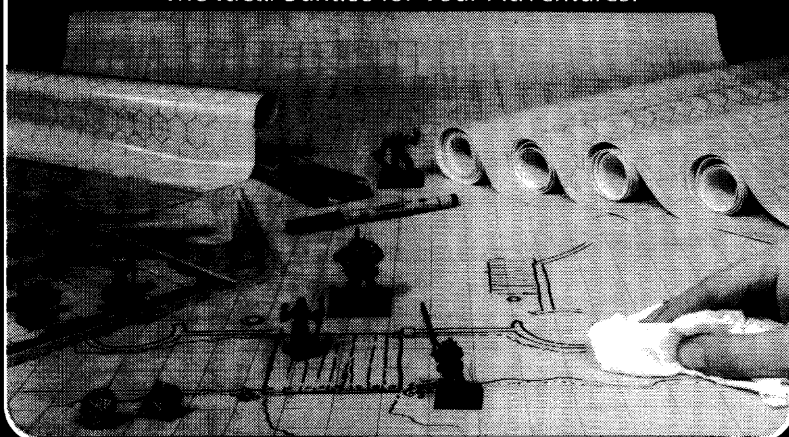
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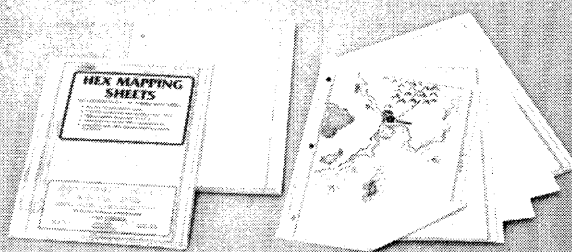
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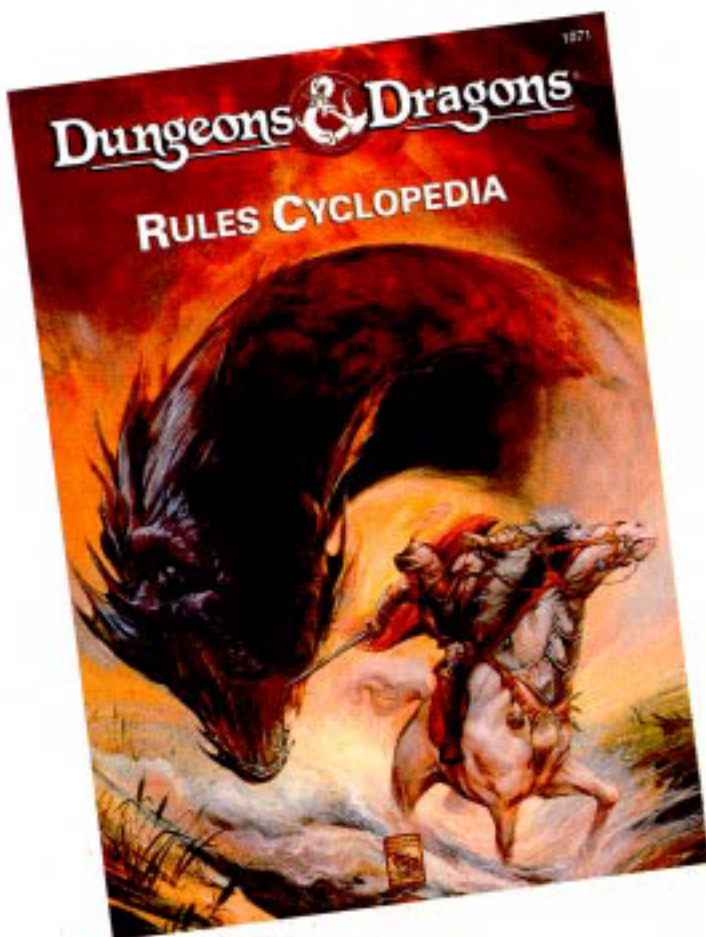
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PLAY WITH THE BEST!

The Game Wizards

by Steven E. Schend



The grand old game—complete at last!

My boss, Jim Ward, asked me to write this column to describe what the new DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game *Rules Cyclopedia* is like, and “exhaustive” is the best word that comes to mind—exhaustive in details, rules, and special touches, all within its 304 pages for our loyal D&D® game players. It was also exhausting for me, the books primary editor, given the long, sleepless nights I spent making sure the book was completed and on the shelves in time.

Before I delve into the history of the product itself, I’d like to thank Aaron Allston, Peggy Cooper, Terry Dykstra, Sarah Feggstad, Bruce Heard, Angelika Lokotz, Jon Pickens, Robin Raab, Stephanie Tabat, James Ward, Dori “Boy Howdy” Watry, and an assembled horde of

graphic designers, proofreaders, and commentators for all their help. Thank you, guys; I couldn’t have done it without you!

Out of the past

Boy, 1991 was a great year for the D&D game line. We premiered the new D&D boxed game, the first truly introductory game in the 15-year history of the D&D line. With a step-by-step learning process, TSR made the oldest role-playing system the easiest to learn and most accessible, for players of all ages. From the beautiful graphics to the rule books grammar, everything was geared toward a seamless system that 10-year-olds could pick up and teach themselves. With this wonderful product for the line, we needed to spruce up the more advanced existing rules to

make the game just as exciting and fresh for our current players.

Taking a few steps back in time, we can further understand the need for the *Rules Cyclopedia*. The year 1983 saw the D&D game take a dramatic change in looks and style with the printing of the Basic Set, colloquially known as “the red box.” Frank Mentzer and a cast of hundreds revised the D&D rules and made them into a tiered system of rules-expanding boxed sets. As the Expert, Companion, and Master Sets were introduced, players saw the game grow along with their characters’ experience until the characters reached their limit at 36th level. The system worked well, and TSR published a fifth boxed set, the Immortals Set, for players who wanted their heroes to explore greater vistas of adventure as Immortals.

However, after the boxed sets were published and the game was complete, players were faced with another problem: “Where is that one particular rule/spell/magical item/monster?” The D&D rules were divided up among seven booklets (nine, counting the Immortals rules) with a total of 368 (or 452) pages of rules. A system like this was a nightmare when referring to rules, tables, and whatnot. Finally, in 1990, the decision was made to compile and compress all the varied D&D rules from the Basic, Expert, Companion, and Master Sets, plus the best of the variant and new rules included in the D&D

Gazetteer line, and place them in one hardbound book. When we looked at the skills and the alternate character classes from the Gazetteers, we suddenly had a ballpark figure of 150 additional pages of rules on characters and magic use. By mid-1990, at the start of the compilation of the *Rules Cyclopedia*, we had to contend with over 500 pages of rules for the system. How in the name of Stefan Karamaikos were we going to fit all this into a manageable hardbound format?

Aaron Allston drew the daunting task of compiling all the information, pulling together every rule from those seven main books and putting them in order. He ironed out some of the wrinkles in the game that had become apparent over the years and effectively merged the rules that had been expanded, creating a complete rules system in one book. Unfortunately, there wasn’t enough room for every character class, skill, type of specialized combat, or monster. Aaron did a marvelous job, but he left us with an intimidating pile

of manuscript paper that was still too large to fit a 304-page book.

Various playtesting groups as well as the TSR staff looked through the manuscript, slowly pulling out areas needing more development or editing; other areas were cut and left behind. The final editing tasks were formidable: checking and rechecking all facts and figures (this resulted in the near destruction of my office copies of the boxed sets from overuse) and cramming the whole lot into a story board and making it work. Dori Watry and Jon Pickens have my undying gratitude for their help in editing sections of the book (especially the indices and the monsters), and we all shared in the double-checking of each other's edited manuscripts. After many long hours and much hard work, the *Rules Cyclopeda* fell into place as you see it today: a complete role-playing system in one book!

The history of the product's development is not as important as telling you what's in the book and what you can get out of it. I brought up its history to show you that projects are rarely the sole effort of those listed on the cover or credits page. The *Rules Cyclopeda* is the product of many different people's work over the 15-year history of the D&D rules, and the hardbound is the result of each person's hard work and dedication to the game. This product is for everyone, and that's what D&D games have always been about.

Into the book

The *Rules Cyclopeda* is not a marked change in the rules or the game (i.e., it's not a "2nd Edition"), but it is a reorganization and clarification of game rules that have been in play for years. The *Rules Cyclopeda* is also not an easy-to-use set of rules; it assumes its readers are at least minimally experienced role-players. If you are a new player, you're better off with the new D&D boxed game (the "black box") specifically designed for new players.

The *Rules Cyclopeda*'s introduction briefly covers the basic ideas of role-playing, mapping, dice use, and the book's organization for those players new to the game; experienced players can easily skip over this part and dive right in to the next section. The book has three major sections after that: player-character creation, rules, and appendices of useful props and information for the game.

Player-character creation occupies the first five chapters of the book, encompassing everything needed for a character. Chapter one handles ability-score and hit-point generation, as well as the basics of the character's name and background. Chapter two presents all the standard character classes and demihuman races; the druid and mystic are also included as player-character classes. Chapters three and four cover spells and personal equipment, while chapter five details the intricacies of weapons mastery and general skills, a new addition to the core rules

from the Gazetteer line. If you and your players prefer a less complicated game, keep in mind that weapons mastery and the general skills are optional and not necessary to enjoy the D&D game.

The rules section encompasses the majority of the book, 181 pages of it, and covers the gamut of core D&D rules. All rules from the four original boxed sets were included, with few changes beyond editing. Within this section, you can expect to find information and rules on:

- Movement, including land, water, and aerial travel;
- Encounters, surprise, monster reactions, and wandering-monster rules and tables;
- Combat with optional morale rules and two-weapon combat, and rules for fighting underwater, in the air, or during a siege (War and Siege Machine rules for mass combat are included);
- Experience;
- NPCs, with rules on hiring them and the DM's role-playing of them;
- DM procedures that isolate questions and problem areas during game play and give guidelines for rulings on alignment, anti-magic, problems with *haste* spells, and other topics;
- Monsters, including nearly every monster included in the Basic, Expert, Companion, and Master sets (and a few more! for 67 pages (contrary to popular rumor, not all of the monsters from our modules, the Creature Catalog, and the CREATURE CRUCIBLE™ series are collected here; we'd need at least 300 pages alone for all that!);
- Immortals, with rules for interacting with these powerful beings (a simplified and optional version of the Immortals rules allows PCs to petition to become Immortals themselves);
- Treasure, including a full list of all magical items and methods for creating your PC's own spells and items;
- Guidelines for administering your own game campaigns and hints on designing and running adventures;
- Breakdowns of the various planes of existence, planar travel, and the effects of the planes on spells and magic; and
- Optional variant rules that can be adopted at the DM's discretion, such as expanded experience levels for mystics and demihumans, and nonlethal combat.

The final section of the *Rules Cyclopeda* is composed of the appendices. Appendix one gives 16 pages of color maps and text about the official D&D campaign world, now named Mystara, which includes the Known World and the HOLLOW WORLD™ setting inside Mystara. Appendix two allows players and DMs to convert their D&D games into AD&D® 2nd Edition games and vice versa; this appendix covers nearly every eventuality from characters to monsters and magical items. Now, more than ever, players can take advantage of the conversion system to use both AD&D and D&D products in their games, no matter which world or game system they

started using! Appendix three contains record sheets for use by DMs and players alike, including a character-record sheet, a spell-book sheet, and mapping paper for use in wilderness encounters or mapping a campaign area. Appendix four gives complete indices of spells (including the reversed spell listings), tables, and the most complete general index ever printed for D&D rules. If you can't find what you're looking for in these indexes, it isn't to be found!

There you have it—everything you need to know about the *Rules Cyclopeda* but were afraid to ask! This is the definitive version of the first fantasy role-playing game, and the book is made to last for years of gaming. Thank you for your continued support of the D&D game line; it's your commitment to high-quality games and support products that brought us to this stage of the game's development. We hope you enjoy it. Ω



LOOKING FOR MORE GAMERS?

You may think you'd have to travel to another planet to find a game convention. Finding friends who are also gamers can be a problem, too. Put your scout suit away and turn to the Convention Calendar in this magazine. There may be a game convention closer to your home than you'd think — and conventions are a great place to find friends who share your interests. Whether you like board-games, role-playing games, miniature wargames, or just browsing around, a game convention can be all you've hoped for. Plan to attend one soon.



"If I Ruled the World ..."

Mad scientists,
megalomaniacs,
and their
motives
in gaming

©1991 by Marcus L. Rowland

He's one of the stock figures of modern-day role-playing games, from espionage to super-hero settings: the would-be world conqueror. This villain has a plan (usually explained at great length to captured heroes), a weapon (often slightly silly), and the ruthlessness (that somehow never extends to killing captured heroes before they escape) needed to seize control. The fact that no one has ever actually managed it is totally irrelevant; our mega-villain is determined to succeed.

It could be argued that the world would be improved by a single centralized government, but a satisfactory form of government needs to be developed first. Maybe the world would have been better off if Napoleon had formed a global empire, but since time machines aren't available, we can't change history to test this idea. With the memory of Hitler still too close for comfort, a diversity of interests and ideas seems a better bet for the future than the whims of a series of dictators.

Most dictators want millions of subjects; it's one of the main attractions of megalomania. Profit and endless luxury are also attractive results of world domination, but there are easier ways of getting rich, and most are a lot safer. A minority want to rule the world for altruistic reasons. Humanity, they argue, can't be trusted with dangerous toys like nuclear weapons and pollutants like toxic wastes, so these must be destroyed or controlled. Other motives for global domination are possible, ranging from political or religious zeal to total insanity and whim, but the first three predominate.

The major global powers have their own plans and goals that may occasionally overlap the topics discussed in this article, but role-playing characters aren't likely to become involved in the high-level activities of these organizations. The governments of the superpowers use long-term political, military, and economic plans, incorporating thousands or millions of elements, rather than the sharply focused activities that constitute the average role-playing game. Dictators prefer smaller and more comprehensible plans that are easier to use in a campaign.

Resistance is useless

The megalomaniacal approach to world domination concentrates on displays of force, or "Ming The Merciless" methods. A bloodless secret conquest isn't much fun, but a true sense of power comes from flying your invulnerable citadel over New York City, crushing or vaporizing some landmarks, and dropping off a few ultimatums. If you can't be harmed and can destroy anyone or anything that gets in your way, you can do whatever you want. There are many variations on this theme, ranging from orbital lasers and particle beams (cutting the dictator's initials across a convenient desert or jungle, and taking out a few submarines and missile bases in passing) to direct control of the weather.

Megalomaniacs almost always use high-profile schemes for world conquest, impressive efforts involving a maximum of publicity, gigantic high-tech machines, and hordes of uniformed flunkies. Even if their scheme revolves around a weapon the size of a bread box, they'll probably put it inside a gigantic fortress that just screams that it's a secret base. This is the villains' main weakness. Hundreds of would-be dictators in film, television, and comic books have been unable to resist explaining their plans in gloating detail, and the dictator's control panel (with a conveniently large Destruct switch) is *always* within easy reach of one hero's fingers.

Why conquer the world?

Global conquest for profit looks a little pointless, since the resources needed for any realistic plan of conquest imply immense wealth to begin with. Unfortunately, wealthy people aren't immune to greed, so someone who was already rich might still be tempted to try for complete control of world finances. A more plausible possibility is the idea that corporations might gradually usurp the role of national governments in the major states, as they once controlled the "banana republics." After all, at least one Western government seems happy to hand over many responsibilities to commercial organizations. Corporate states seem a logical extension of this idea.

Conquest could benefit the megacorporations in many ways. Effective control of governments would allow them to change laws to protect their immense wealth and divert global resources into profitable channels. This doesn't necessarily mean channels that help the public, since lots of profitable activities are useless or dangerous. For example, the arms race would probably continue, though the dictators would hopefully ensure that nuclear weapons were never actually used. Pollution might continue, since there doesn't seem to be much profit in stopping it unless it gets in the way of productivity.

A profit-based system would probably have a very low profile, and the public might be wholly unaware of its secret rulers; manipulation behind the scenes is a good deal safer than an open operation and is more in keeping with the shadowy world of international finance. Does anyone really know who controls the world's wealth? It's interesting to note that the most plausible plan for global conquest I've ever seen could only be mounted by one multinational company; of course, there are those who would claim that IBM already rules the world, but that may be a little far-fetched. Other industrial giants also have interesting potential; orbital mind-control lasers are probably still science fiction, but the Muzak Corporation should have its own satellite transmitters before the end of the century, and it can openly claim that its product is effective in manipulating human behavior.

So far, I've only mentioned legitimate business, but any sufficiently large criminal organization is essentially a corporation. Criminal business tactics and corporate politics tend to be a little more lethal than legal ones, but the eventual results are much the same. A criminal dictatorship would probably need to put up a respectable front, so the casual observer would notice little real difference between a corporate dictatorship and a crime-syndicate takeover.

It's easy to imagine a world ruled by big business, and this background is used in many science-fiction stories. The period in which national governments lose control to these corporations could be an interesting setting for many game systems. Don't expect to have a meaningful discussion with the elite under corporate rule; middle management will handle all tedious details, such as overthrowing governments, hiring hit men, and the like.

You're in good hands

Genuinely altruistic dictators are rare, but anyone arrogant enough to want to conquer the world might believe that the world will benefit from his rule. In some cases, this goal is the main motive for conquest.

One simple way to impose your utopian view is to ensure that no one else is around to stop you. This is the "cruel to be kind" approach used by villains in some James Bond films: kill off most of the human race, making sure that a few hand-picked sympathizers are around to pick up the pieces afterward. A truly benevolent dictator won't find this solution acceptable and may try less direct methods. Tricking humanity into doing what you want is possibly easier to justify than the use of force. One idea that has appeared several times is world unification against the threat of invasion from space; faking this convincingly can't be easy, but might just be possible with the right technology behind you. The snag is that this method doesn't leave the potential dictator in an obvious position to assume power, unless the dictator happens to be the Secretary-General of the United Nations. A sufficiently cunning scheme might make the victims cooperate with their conqueror, but any failure would probably ensure that the planned effect was never achieved.

Altruistic dictators are usually obsessive personalities; they are convinced of the rightness of their cause, but feel guilty about and will try to explain and justify their actions. They will reveal their plans, but they'll usually wait until it is too late for anyone to intervene.

We have the technology

So far, we've talked about motives for conquering the world. What about methods? Let's define "the world." For the sake of argument, a dictator wants some or all of the following:

- 1: Control of the physical planet Earth.
- 2: Control of the biosphere (plants, animals, etc.)
- 3: Control of the human population and human resources.

The most obvious way of achieving Objective #1 is by starting a nuclear war. The villain and a few trusty henchmen and henchwomen simply hide out in space, underwater, or a really deep bomb shelter, then wait for the ruins to stop glowing in the dark. There are a few obvious drawbacks, such as the fact that any base on or near Earth is statistically likely to be near a nuclear explosion. Then there's the possibility of triggering a nuclear winter or global flooding, destroying the ozone layer, and so on. Of course, the smoldering charnel heap our dictator inherits isn't good for much, but someone like Hitler might regard that as an acceptable price for global supremacy. If any game master is contemplating this idea for his next adventure, please note that several dozen healthy men and women are needed for a stable gene pool; a smaller population develops inbreeding problems.

Biological warfare seems the best way to achieve Objective #2 (and presumably #1, by default). In practice, though, the logistics of simultaneously killing everyone on Earth are daunting. Immediately lethal viruses sound good in theory, but a fast-developing disease tends to kill off victims before they can spread it very far. The ideal germ warfare virus has the following properties:

A: The victim is apparently healthy but highly infectious for a few days before the terminal stages.

B: The people who "launch" the virus can be protected against it, perhaps by vaccination.

C: Mortality (or any other desired effects) should approach 100%.

All this sounds plausible, but the safe use of biological weapons poses immense problems. Viruses have a habit of mutating, and the immunity of their users isn't always assured. On the other hand, some of the intended victims may happen to be naturally immune, and others may not suffer the full effects of the disease. There's also a risk of triggering a nuclear war, since the nuclear powers would probably assume that their enemies had spread the disease. Launch crews tend to be isolated in aircraft, submarines, or deep shelters, and they would learn about a plague long before it affected them.

Objective #3 is undoubtedly the most appealing but is also the hardest to achieve. This is the realm of diplomacy, propaganda, and blackmail. The main requirement is a threat so terrible that no government or individual is likely to attempt to stand in your way. A demonstrable ability to destroy the world is a good start, but has the drawback of being somewhat final; what's really needed is a controllable threat, a weapon that's unstoppable but has a finite effect. De-



stroying Mars, New York, or the mayor of Bugtussle, Arkansas, by a method that potentially allows you to destroy the world is a better idea than producing an ultimate doomsday weapon and waiting for someone to call your bluff. Beam weapons fit the bill nicely, but the orbital stations needed to use them may be a bit vulnerable. If nuclear weapons are used, a preannounced detonation at a fairly unimportant site may be the best bet, with a promise that there are plenty more bombs available if necessary. The drawback is that the major governments have lived with the threat of nuclear war for several decades, and they may not easily be impressed by a loud bang (they might also retaliate).

Biological weapons are more difficult to demonstrate; there's no real way to show that they are unstoppable without releasing them. A compromise solution might be the use of a less dangerous disease, with some distinctive effect that is easy to predict. For example, if you sent an ultimatum warning that the weak version of your mutant anthrax would make everyone's hair fall out, then released it and caused an unstoppable plague of baldness, major governments might take your threats more seriously.

If blackmail doesn't appeal, how about brainwashing and other psychological tricks? Subliminal TV and radio messages have often been suggested in this role, but there doesn't seem to be much evidence that they work particularly well, and months of saturation coverage would be needed to ensure that everyone was affected. There's another problem in that most research suggests that these techniques will only work on target groups that share a common language and cultural background. Global brainwashing doesn't look very likely. Perhaps brainwashing would work if these methods were accompanied by other techniques. Several drugs are known to heighten suggestibility or reduce intelligence. One nasty possibility is use of a disease that makes the victim's body synthesize such drugs, without any other major harmful effects, accompanied by an intense media blitz. Some authors have even suggested that sophisticated biological research may be able to come up with a disease that programs the victim's personality directly by interfering with memory RNA. The snag here is that there is no real evidence that any two individuals store memory information in exactly the same way.

Deception techniques may be another route to control of the human race, possibly accompanied by some or all of the brainwashing methods mentioned. All of these schemes would probably be preferred by commercial or altruistic dictators; megalomaniacs would probably find that they worked too slowly to satisfy their desires. These methods are also extremely expensive—and, speaking of financing . . .

Money is wonderful

Conquering the world is phenomenally expensive, unless you can come up with a plan that finances itself. Equipment may be stolen, but items like bases and personnel cost money. This gives commercial organizations a real advantage; they already possess many of the resources needed for any major operation, from production facilities and warehouses to transport and laboratories. THRUSH, the villainous organization in The Man From U.N.C.L.E. TV series, was a particularly good example of a dictatorial organization that hid behind commercial fronts and got a lot of its income from legitimate activities. One episode even showed how retired middle-management personnel were murdered to avoid paying their pensions. SPECTRE, in the James Bond novels, and WEB, in TSR's TOP SECRET/S.I.TM game, also use legitimate commercial organizations as cover.

Governments are even more useful as sources of seed capital and as cover for covert activities. They have good reasons to maintain prisons, army bases, and other useful facilities. Control of at least one government is a useful step in any plot to achieve global supremacy.

All of this sounds difficult to achieve, but anyone who stands any chance of conquering the world shouldn't find it hard to organize a take-over bid or a small military coup. Today Consolidated Coconuts Inc.; tomorrow the Republic of Jibrovia; next week, the world!

Home sweet home

Every conqueror needs a base, and really elaborate schemes probably require several. It may be possible to start a plan for global conquest in your garden shed, but there could be a few problems if you wanted to install a cyclotron or a shuttle launch facility. These things are also extremely difficult to hide; current satellite technology is able to track objects as small as a cigarette pack or garden hose under ideal conditions, and they can probably spot major installations despite camouflage and bad weather. Earth resource satellites may even be able to detect large underground or underwater structures. Fortunately for potential dictators, it takes a lot of time to analyze satellite data, and events in an apparently unimportant area may simply be overlooked. This can't always be counted on, though. One futuristic spy novel written in the 1960s and set in the 1980s picked a then-ideal isolated area where no one would be likely to notice a large base and several hundred mercenaries; a quarter-century later, Afghanistan doesn't seem a particularly good choice. The rapid expansion of global tourism could also cause a few problems. It's hard to imagine any isolated location that isn't threatened by hordes of adventurous sightseers.

When I began this article, I intended to include detailed plans for an elaborate

base, equipped with everything from interrogation rooms and laboratories to waterbeds filled with piranha. However, there are hundreds of examples on television, in books and in films, so it would really be a waste of space. Designing a base is fun, and you can find examples of almost anything you want, if you look at enough sources. Need an inaccessible castle? Try Where Eagles Dare, Dance of the Vampires, or Madame Sin. Do you need a polar fortress? Take your pick from Doc Savage, Superman, or The Watchmen. Feel like owning a space station? The James Bond film, Moonraker, has a splendidly silly example, and there's always the Death Star if you're thinking really big. There are also many role-playing scenarios and adventures built around these structures, described in much more detail than could ever be put into a magazine article.

In designing a base for a role-playing scenario, remember to think big, flashy, and high tech. Computers should be vast metal cabinets with hundreds of flashing lights and whirring tapes, not anonymous gray boxes. There should be lots of impressive signs; "DANGER: 20,000 VOLTS" and "ACHTUNG! MINEN!" are reliable standbys, but don't neglect radiation and biohazard symbols, or eloquent messages like "TRESPASSERS WILL BE SHOT!" Naturally any base should have a good supply of sadistic prison guards, mercenaries, mad scientists, beautiful "foils" (a term borrowed from the Victory Games' JAMES BOND 007* game), and other interesting NPCs.

It's important to realize that bases should look impregnable, but they must have a few loopholes for game play. Player characters need to be able to enter them and save the world, so remember to leave a few weak points. For example, a mine field might be laid so badly that any explosion sets off a chain reaction that leaves a clear path through the field. Guards might be lazy, inattentive, or easily bribed, and might carry large bunches of interesting keys. Passes and uniforms might be forged or stolen. If you bear these points in mind and design your base for excitement rather than lethality, your players should enjoy having their heroes deal with it.

A cunning plan

Finally, here are some sample dictators and details of their motives, methods, resources, and chances of success, plus adventuring ideas involving them.

Outback Overlord

Dictator: The Reverend Matilda

Braithwaite

Motive: Altruistic lunatic

Method: Mind control

Resources: 2,300 followers, \$5 million, TV station

Mrs. Braithwaite is an Australian TV evangelist, the leader of an obscure fundamentalist sect, who believes that the world would be much nicer if she ran it. She hasn't yet decided exactly how she will

run the world if she does take control, but she's sure that a right-thinking person like herself will do a better job than hundreds of professional politicians and diplomats.

One of her followers has developed a new psychotropic drug that drains will-power and makes the victim abnormally susceptible to suggestion. It is effective in microgram doses. Mrs. Braithwaite persuaded him to manufacture enough of the drug to blanket the local water reservoir, and she is now in complete control of Wombat's Crossing (population 2,300), the New South Wales town where she is based. As yet, the Australian government hasn't noticed any abnormality; a sleepy town has merely gotten sleepier. As more of the drug is synthesized, Mrs. Braithwaite plans to extend her rule to neighboring areas, then further afield as she takes control of more chemical factories.

Mrs. Braithwaite's plan is effective in an isolated area because her domain has little contact with the outside world. There is only one local TV station (hers), and the town isn't linked to the satellite network yet, so her broadcasts are the main influence on victims of the drug. In any larger town, the victims would be bombarded by TV and other media influences from dozens of sources, so her chances of retaining control would be slim. Since she isn't a particularly good administrator, conditions in the territory she controls will worsen before too long, eventually attracting government attention.

Adventurers should encounter her, perhaps accidentally, soon after she takes control of Wombat's Crossing. The townspeople will behave like passive zombies under Mrs. Braithwaite's direction, but they may overcome the adventurers by sheer weight of numbers if the adventurers threaten her. Try to ensure that at least one adventurer falls victim to the drug and the TV station. This should not be a particularly lethal adventure.

Lost—and Found

Dictator: President Kamshalla Motubo

Motive: Profit

Method: Nuclear blackmail

Resources: Small African nation, four nuclear warheads

Three months ago a Chinese submarine accidentally launched a live missile with four MIRV warheads. Fortunately, they weren't armed; unfortunately, the self-destruct system didn't work, and the missile landed in a swamp near Motubo's capital. The army dug it out and took the warheads to an isolated jungle base. Now, Motubo is trying to find a weapons expert who will be able to arm the bombs.

Motubo intends to hold a few Western capitals for ransom, use the money to buy a better presidential palace and some more warheads, then start the cycle again. He doesn't want to control the world; he just wants to milk it for enough cash to ensure a permanently luxurious lifestyle.

There's one major flaw in this plan: The

Chinese government knows that Motubo has the warheads but isn't sure of their current location. Chinese agents would be a little conspicuous in an African country, so the Chinese government is recruiting a reliable mercenary force to recover the bombs.

Characters can be involved in this adventure as Chinese agents, as mercenaries, as Western agents trying to find out what the Chinese are doing, as criminals trying to steal the bombs from Motubo, or as counterintelligence agents looking for the bombs after Motubo's agents have planted them. They might also be called in to find a nuclear physicist who has been kidnapped to arm the bombs. This should be an extremely dangerous mission in which player characters stand a real chance of being wounded or killed.

A Pox Upon You

Dictator: Doctor John Dressler

Motive: Megalomania

Method: Biological warfare

Resources: University laboratory

Doctor Dressler was a brilliant virologist who devoted much of his life's work to the fight against smallpox. When the World Health Organization decided that the disease was finally eradicated, his university decided to economize by cutting funds for some of Dressler's projects. Dressler believed that he was on the verge of discoveries that would (at least) earn him the Nobel prize and might lead to cures for dozens of diseases. The sudden loss of funds forced him to stop his work and triggered his latent insanity. If the world doesn't want to be cured, Dressler has decided to make everyone suffer instead.

Unknown to the university authorities, Dressler retained a supply of live smallpox virus and has spent years developing new and more virulent bioengineered forms that will not respond to traditional vaccines. Dressler intends to release the disease at London Airport, wait until a global pandemic has started, then announce that he has a vaccine that will be available if the governments of the world agree to his terms. His terms amount to immediate and absolute control of all United Nations activity, as well as progressive control of the world's national governments. The vaccine and all documents describing its manufacture are locked in his laboratory, in a booby-trapped safe packed with explosives. Any attempt to overpower him or force the safe open will result in destruction of the material. Once Dressler has started to take the reins of power, he will reveal that there are several strains of the virus, with different incubation periods. Each requires a separate vaccine, and he will only release them as his demands are met.

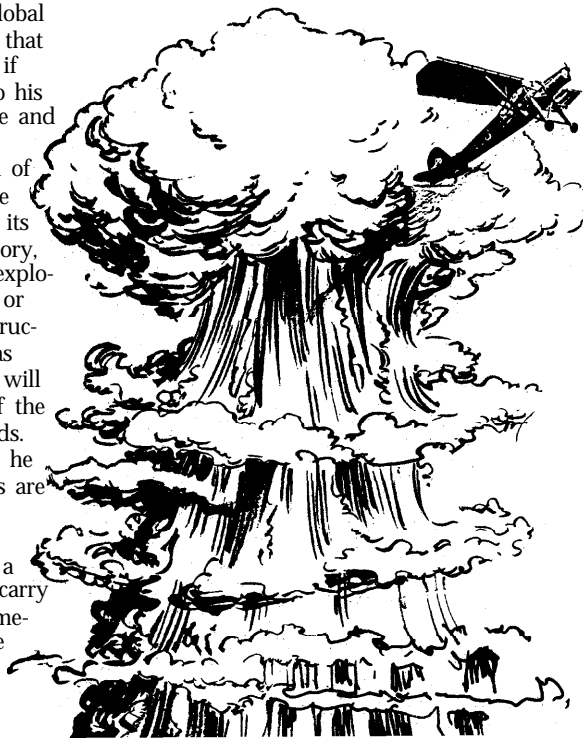
Dressler is an extremely dangerous opponent. He isn't initially backed by a large organization, but he can really carry out his threats. Adventurers must somehow overcome him without losing the

vaccines or his notes. He is quite capable of letting a few million people die to prove that he means what he says. If he can take control, he'll start to act out grotesque power fantasies, starting with a ceremonial execution of his "enemies," such as the financial controllers of his university.

Acknowledgements

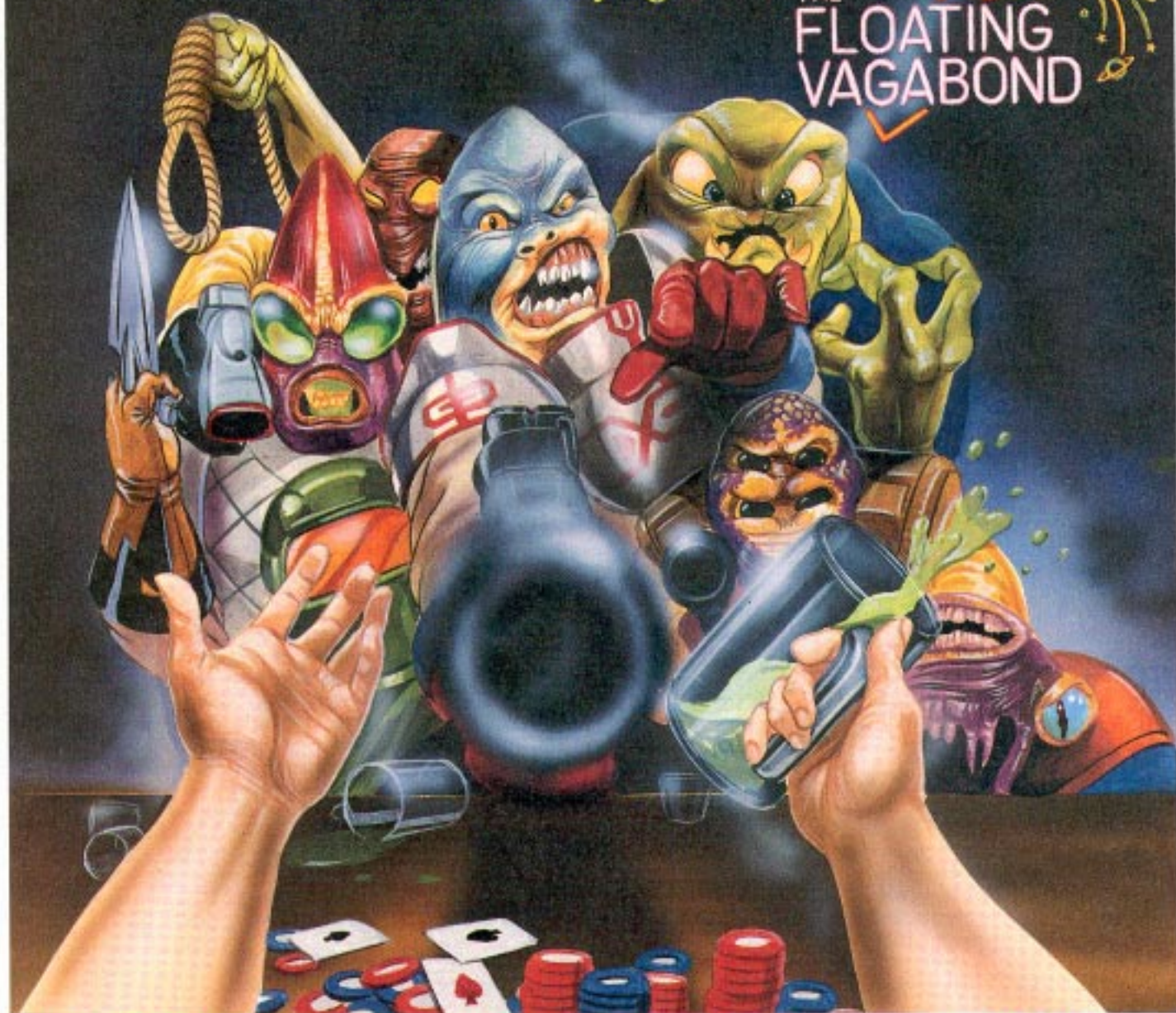
The title of this article was suggested by a song from the musical, *Pickwick*. I would like to thank Roger Robinson, John Dallman, Terry Pratchett, and other friends for their ideas on this theme. Brief suggestions (in no particular order) for further reading and viewing on this topic include: *War In 2080* and *The Space Eater*, by Dave Langford; *The Assassination Bureau Ltd.*, by Jack London; *W. G. Grace's Last Case*, by William Rushton; *The Great Wash*, by Gerald Kersh; *The Watchmen*, by Alan Moore; *The Iron Dream*, by Norman Spinrad; *The White Plague*, by Frank Herbert; *To Howard Hughes: A Modest Proposal*, by Joe Haldeman; *Down The Programmed Rabbit Hole*, by Anthony Haden-Guest; *Underkill*, by James White; *Love Sickness*, by Geoff Ryman; *Mind-killer*, by Spider Robinson; and *The Satan Rug*, by Alistair MacLean. The movies *Superman III*, *Madame Sin*, and *Rollerball* are also recommended, and almost all the James Bond films feature plans to conquer the world or elaborate secret bases. Role-playing material of interest includes: *Operation: Starfire*, for TSR's TOP SECRET/S.I. game; *Villains*, for Victory Games' JAMES BOND 007 game; and *Zombietown U.S.A.*, for Steve Jackson Games' GURPS* system. Ω

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Sometimes it's green and sometimes it's brown,
but it's always a small Caribbean lizard."

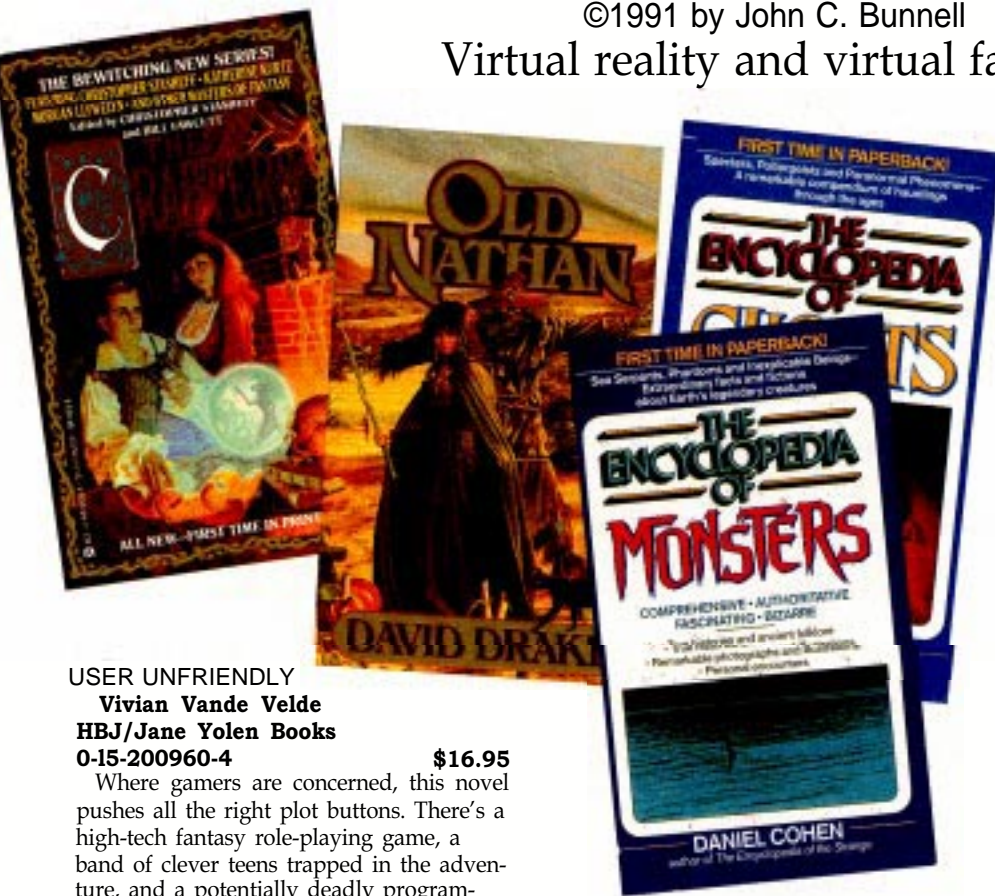
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Virtual reality and virtual fantasy



USER UNFRIENDLY

Vivian Vande Velde

HBJ/Jane Yolen Books

0-15-200960-4

\$16.95

Where gamers are concerned, this novel pushes all the right plot buttons. There's a high-tech fantasy role-playing game, a band of clever teens trapped in the adventure, and a potentially deadly programming glitch. Unfortunately, *User Unfriendly* takes its intriguing idea and wraps it around a novel that's extremely difficult to enjoy.

Vivian Vande Velde's version of electronic adventuring hooks its players into a software-generated "virtual reality" setting. While their bodies lie idle in a basement computer room, their minds and senses are voyaging through a synthesized world of unkempt medieval inns and monster-infested caverns. The twist is that narrator Arvin's mother, a newcomer to gaming, is along for the ride. That raises the stakes when twin problems emerge: There's a defect in the game software that deprives the party of access to healing-magic, and the illness from which Arvin's mother is suffering may not be entirely a product of the game.

From that point on, the story's dimensions are familiar. Arvin and company must try to complete their programmed

quest, with a full array of pregenerated adversaries and an unpredictably aberrant computer ranged against them. There are fights with skeletons and giant rats, magical items to be won, puzzles to be solved, and things that are not as they appear. Vande Velde presents the scenario skillfully enough, but she doesn't provide any significant embellishment to the traditional sequence of events.

That might not be a problem, if only her characters were more likeable. But Arvin's party descends too quickly into petty bickering and helpless hand-wringing, finds itself unexpectedly divided, and generally has a hard time keeping its mind on the quest. It helps neither Arvin's nor the reader's mood when the "lost" members of the party eventually reappear with plenty of treasure and tales of exciting adventures, while Arvin's group has been suffering through a remarkably dreary

and unproductive detour. Experienced gamers will find it hard to sympathize with Arvin's perpetual frustration, and they will wonder why it takes so long for the adventurers to pick up on obvious clues.

Experienced gamers may also find the electronic game's mechanics difficult to unravel. It's designed to run with live on-line observers to catch and fix programming loops, and specialized biofeedback hardware to monitor participants' responses. But it works reasonably well on a high-end home computer with no exotic peripherals worth mentioning, which seems impossible given the virtual-reality features Vande Velde describes. Moreover, Vande Velde treats software piracy purely as a plot device, ignoring the legal and ethical dimensions (not to mention badly underplaying the risks) of the gamers' actions in appropriating a copy of the game code.

The bottom line is that *User Unfriendly* is an unintentionally apt title. The premise is clever enough, but Vande Velde's novel chronicles a remarkably unfriendly adventure in a tone that will leave readers shaking their heads.

SHADOW

Anne Logston

Ace 0-441-75989-0

\$3.99

Fantasy writers of late have been going to great lengths to make their novels *different*, to add some unique spin to their worlds, tales, or characters. New writer Anne Logston, though, has done almost exactly the opposite—and the result is a sword-and-sorcery yarn whose feather-light writing qualifies it as one of the most purely entertaining books I've read in ages.

You won't find world-spanning evil or cataclysmic disaster here, only the unpredictable exploits of Shadow, a wandering elf with an engaging manner and as deft a hand as any thief in the local guild—which comes in handy, as the local guild in Allamere is a hotbed of mystery and confusion, and even Shadow's friendship with the daughter of the city rulers may not be enough to protect her from the guildmas-

ter's hired assassins.

It's certainly a puzzle to Shadow, who's paid the guilds membership fees and carefully avoided victims with connections too powerful to antagonize—unless, that is, the attacks have something to do with the curious bracelet she lifted from a minor noble's pouch on her first afternoon in the city market. That's very possible, because the bracelet is magical and may be the crucial link in a plot more convoluted than the bracelet's own intricate silver filigree.

Logston unfolds the adventure at a lively pace and gives Shadow a cheerfully roguish sparkle that is utterly contagious yet not without its wistful side. She's also a skilled hand with a set piece, and the choreography of Shadow's various schemes and deceptions is a pleasure to read, though Logston is careful not to make her heroine so competent as to be invulnerable. More than anything, the novel blends elements of classic swash-bucklers with an unabashed sense of fun that is entirely too rare in recent fantasy adventures.

Shadow makes no pretense of being anything other than what it is: a briskly enjoyable diversion. But it's one of the best-crafted diversions to come along in a very long time, and its amusing good sense about the thieving trade should be especially welcome to gamers and referees who have had difficulty orchestrating city-adventures for roguish types. Anne Logston's debut novel is a thoroughly satisfying surprise, and a welcome one at that.

THE GRAFTERS

**Christopher Stasheff &
Bill Fawcett, eds.**

Ace 0-441-12130-6 \$4.50

The problem with *The Crafters* isn't that the stories are inferior; most of them are quietly told and pleasantly readable. The problem is that too many of them strike the same note, making this new shared-world collection sound like a tower bell striking nine o'clock rather than a variety of instruments playing distinct variations of a similar tune.

Part of the difficulty may be that *The Crafters* is rather odd by the standards of shared worlds. The premise involves a magically gifted family founded by and descended from alchemist Amer Crafter and his witch-wife Samona, dating from the Salem witchcraft trials into the present day. Most of the stories in this first book in the promised series take place in pre-Revolutionary colonial America, but Ru Emerson takes her Crafter descendant to London, Morgan Llewelyn's closing tale reaches forward to 19th-century Ireland, and co-editor Bill Fawcett frames the book with a modern-day sketch speculating on the origins of glasnost. Even the three stories focusing on Amer and Samona don't overlap significantly, each instead recounting a separate incident in a sepa-

rate context.

That diversity of settings doesn't help the collection, but what's more frustrating is that four of the nine stories involve essentially the same plot: various Crafters find love and marriage through incidents in which their magical abilities must be invoked. On their own, the individual tales are entertaining enough (collaborators Anna O'Connell and Doug Houseman provide the best take on the colonial period). Taken together, however, the effect is frustratingly metronomic.

The two most distinctive contributions are a mist-shrouded vignette from Katherine Kurtz (her strongest published material in some time, and possibly a precursor to a promised novel) and Robert Sheckley's neatly plotted tale of demonic bargains. Jody Lynn Nye's "The Seeing Stone" is also among her best stories to date, and though Morgan Llewelyn's Irish story is out of step with the rest of the book, it's a solid piece as well. Equally out of step, but less appealing, is a verse by Judith R. Conly that drives home its point with much too heavy a hand.

In short, *The Crafters* is a shared world in name but not in execution. There's no sense of editorial cohesion here, no guiding vision in evidence. The idea is interesting, and gamers with a particular interest in the period may find some material of value. But it feels as if Stasheff and Fawcett handed out writing assignments for this anthology before they finished designing the world, and the result is an anthology that just doesn't fit together very well.

OLD NATHAN

David Drake

Baen 0-671-72084-8 \$4.50

One of the standard role-playing tricks for fleshing out a character is to give him a distinctive speech pattern. David Drake uses the literary equivalent of that tactic in *Old Nathan*, but applies the dialect much too thickly and as a substitute for characterization rather than an accent to it. What's left after wading through the overwritten dialogue is a thin, remarkably unappealing tale that's more annoying than satisfying.

Drake writes the backwoods conversation in heavy strokes. He doesn't limit himself to archaic phrases and expressions, but spells at least half the words phonetically (e.g., "uv" for "of," "thet" for "that," "agin" for "again"), to the extent that readers will likely be translating the dialogue in their heads as they move through the story.

After the translation, though, most of the color in the book goes away, leaving a mix of timeworn fairy-tale or ghost-story plots and a strange, seemingly artificial romantic triangle. The books structure is equally odd: The ongoing plot strands aren't treated in enough depth to make them work as a novel, while there are too few stories to make it satisfying as a collection of short fiction. The setting, too, is more vague than

colorful, with few geographical tags and only sparse references to genuine post-Revolutionary America (in which the book supposedly takes place). Minor copy-editing could easily transfer Old Nathan's adventures to the backwoods of any world passing into its industrial age.

Old Nathan himself is hard to like—an irascible, raw old man who doesn't suffer fools gladly. It doesn't help that while Nathan is the title character, Drake's focus wanders back and forth between Nathan and his clients. *Old Nathan* is sometimes a book of stories about a backwoods "cunning-man" or wizard who helps those who seek his counsel, and sometimes a book about that old wizards struggle with his own burdens.

What Drake gives readers in this book is a great deal of window dressing with no window attached. Only the overdone language holds the narrative together; when that's subtracted, none of the remaining structure is solid enough to stand on its own. At best, the book offers readers a striking example of what storytelling is not.

BEING OF TWO MINDS

Pamela F. Service

Atheneum 0-689-31524-4 \$13.95

Be warned: You'll find *Being of Two Minds* in the children's section of your library or bookstore, and quite properly so. But that doesn't stop it from being a clever science-fiction yarn that handles a deceptively simple premise with rare common sense.

Connie is a mostly average Midwestern teenager; Rudy is crown prince of Thulgaria, a pocket-sized Central European monarchy noted for its neutrality. Born at the same instant with nearly identical brain patterns, they take turns at hosting each other's minds at the back of their own—while the visitor's body lies in a temporary coma.

For Connie and Rudy, the effect has produced a friendship that far outweighs the inconvenience of the unpredictable fainting spells. Their families, unaware of the link, find the condition worrying and search constantly for a "cure." Secrecy goes out the window when Rudy is kidnapped by a rebel Thulgarian faction while Connie is "watching," and Connie quickly finds herself on a desperate chase through the Thulgarian countryside in hopes of mounting a rescue.

Service tells the story in a clear, straightforward style, and her handling of the mind-link is thorough and logical. Rudy and Connie are likeable protagonists, with believable reactions to the events unfolding around them, and Service populates the novel with equally convincing secondary characters, from Connie's puzzled parents to Rudy's jovial but possibly dangerous uncle. She also keeps the derring-do at a plausible level; the young heroes show poise under fire without taking implausible risks.

It's this successful integration of reasonableness into an entirely unreasonable situation that may be of particular interest to gamers involved in modern-day role-playing games. *Being of Two Minds* is essentially a spy thriller, and it's both rare and apt in its ability to keep tension alive with a minimum of pyrotechnics. This is one of Pamela Service's most successful novels to date, and it should easily enhance her already solid reputation.

THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MONSTERS & THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF GHOSTS

Daniel Cohen

Avon 0-380-71485-X and
0-380-71484-1 \$4.99 each

Daniel Cohen's compilations of monster sightings and haunted-house reports are neither fantasy fiction nor coldly neutral journalism—but both books are certainly of considerable value to gamers in search of creatures and plots on which to hang adventures. (A third volume, *The Encyclopedia of the Strange*, appears in the series, but that book didn't show up in the review package.)

The Encyclopedia of Monsters focuses not on movie creatures, but on creatures from folklore, legend, and the fringes of science. Cohen's categories are broad and logical: humanoids (Bigfoot and the like), land-based creatures, flying monsters, phantoms, "strange visitors," sea monsters, and creatures from folklore. Geographically, accounts have been drawn from around the world—from places like Canadian lakes, New York City sewers, the African jungle, and the high seas—though the emphasis is nominally American. Some of the entries deal with well-known beasts like the Loch Ness monster, while others cover more obscure entities (a giant South American earthworm, for instance). The companion volume of ghost material is also subdivided, if a bit more subjectively. Categories include traditional hauntings, poltergeists, animal ghosts, celebrity ghosts, and "ghostly phenomena." Here again, the accounts range from the famous (including the Amityville Horror, the ghost of Abraham Lincoln, and the haunts of the Tower of London) to the unusual, such as a ghost reputed to haunt a German U-boat during World War I.

Entries in both books average two or three pages in length, so that what Cohen provides are often highly condensed versions of the original reports. The reporting is neither relentlessly skeptical nor uncritically enthusiastic; Cohen does make an effort to assess the evidence in each case, and he makes no apologies for his opinions (he firmly dismisses the Amityville story as a hoax, for instance). His history is occasionally prone to oversimplification; in the Tower of London entry, for example, he mentions Richard III's supposed murder of his princely nephews without noting that modern scholarship on the issue is at least sharply divided. The accounts are most reliable when Cohen's sources can draw

on eyewitness testimony or contemporary newspaper reportage.

Cohen's writing style is not always as even-handed as his conclusions. While his introductions and wrap-ups are done in his own voice, journalistic qualifiers are often absent from the stories themselves. That sometimes makes the material sound more authoritative than it really is, and it tilts the books away from unbiased reportage into the realms of speculation. This isn't a fatal flaw, nor is it necessarily even inappropriate, but it's an important factor in understanding and characterizing these collections.

Each volume includes a section of illustrations and photographs as well as an informal bibliography. The former are mostly superfluous, but the latter are potentially useful, though Cohen's assessments of his sources occasionally sound more enthusiastic than analytical.

These encyclopedias are no more than a starting point for the serious researcher, and casual readers should be careful to treat them as popular journalism rather than thorough scholarship. Gamers, though, should find them invaluable references from which to draw new monsters and scenarios, or for introducing new wrinkles to existing creatures. Everyone from AD&D® game campaigners to players of espionage and near-future games should find useful accounts in Cohen's compilations—and in a market where role-playing supplements are growing ever more expensive, these books are a definite bargain.

Recurring roles

Publishing sometimes moves extraordinarily fast. Since the last installment of this column, both the second and third volumes of L. J. Smith's "Vampire Diaries" trilogy have appeared. *The Struggle* and *The Awakening* (Harper Paperbacks, \$3.99 each) complete Smith's young-adult trilogy involving vampiric twin brothers and the New England teenager drawn to them both. Smith's plot is as convoluted as they come, and the endings are real surprises by packaged-series standards. Get past the slightly cloying teen-romance elements, and you'll find these books startlingly compelling.

A very different high-school tale is *Harpy High* (Ace, \$4.50), second in Esther Friesner's latest trilogy, in which monsters of all sorts become covert students at a New York public school. The balance between slapstick and high drama is tenuous; this isn't Friesner's best work, but it's still a cleverly humorous yarn with a dark twist.

For humor that simply doesn't work, Craig Shaw Gardner is at least consistent. *The Other Sinbad* (Ace, \$4.50) is an attempt to send up the familiar Arabian Nights legend of Sinbad the Sailor, but Gardner again demonstrates an uncanny inability to tailor his comedy to his chosen subject. The jokes here are forced and out

of place, and unfortunately constitute the entirety of the plot. Regrettably, this is billed as the first of a series.

Christopher Stasheff has been busy of late; *Warlock and Son* (Ace, \$4.50) is one result. On the plus side, this tale focuses tightly on longtime hero Rod Gallowglass and his oldest son, Magnus, with a densely plotted narrative involving a sophisticated ethical dilemma. That's usually been Stasheff's strength, but this time there's a dark spin on events that is unsettling in what has previously been a uniformly upbeat series. A weirdly ambiguous ending only adds to the uneasiness; this one is uncalleable till the next book comes out.

By contrast, *Searching for Dragons* (HBJ/Jane Yolen; \$16.95) is a worthy and lively addition to Patricia Wrede's chronicles of a nontraditional princess, an unpredictable enchanted forest, a society of persistently nefarious wizards, and a tribe of remarkably inoffensive dragons. Rarely have left-handed fairy tales been this much fun, and Wrede expands her whimsical world in stylish fashion.

Kill Station (Avon, \$3.99) likewise expands the universe to which it belongs, namely the "Space Cops" series from Diane Duane and Peter Morwood. This time the story is more thriller than whodunit, with a plot that ranges from the far side of the asteroid belt all the way back to Earth orbit, and the limited perspective of the first book gets a substantial boost. It's still space opera, but it's better space opera than the last installment, which is good news.

This has also been a good season for TSR™ Books' adventures. The entire Elven Nations trilogy is now out, and those who have dismissed the DRAGONLANCE® line as "mere" cardboard-quest fiction will find that this saga of dynastic successions doesn't fit their preconceptions. I haven't been especially fond of past novels from Paul Thompson and Tanya Carter, but their *Qualinesti* (TSR, \$4.95) in particular concludes the trilogy in satisfying fashion.

On the flip side, *Canticle* (TSR, \$4.95) begins a new series of FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting novels from veteran chronicler R. A. Salvatore, whose work I have been pleased with in the past. This first of five books rambles more than it should, and Salvatore springs a plot point involving the chief adversaries that has nothing whatever to do with this initial novel. The character work is still intriguing, and there's room for improvement as the series progresses.

It's probably time once again to note that review materials and correspondence regarding this column are always welcome, and should be directed to me at:

John C. Bunnell
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I can't promise to answer every letter, or review everything I receive, but your comments are always welcome. ♪

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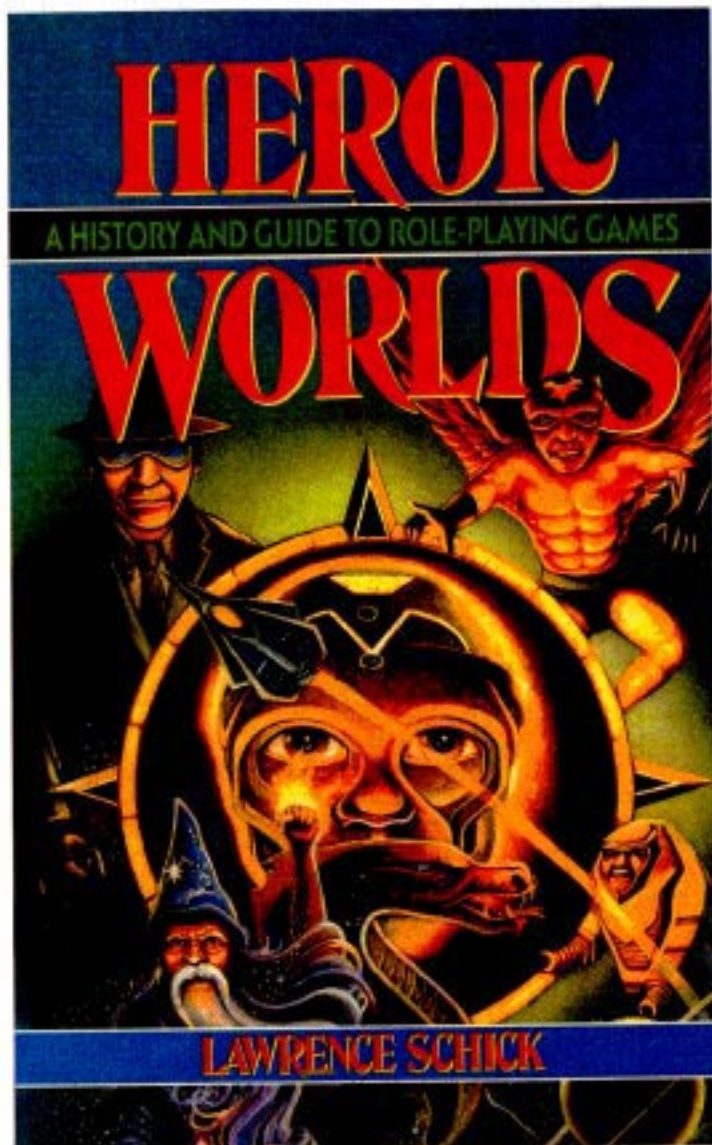
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The *Heroic Worlds* Role-Playing Game Quiz

Think you know all there is to know about RPGs?
Let's find out!



©1991 by Lawrence Schick

This quiz provides a rigorous test of your knowledge of the world of role-playing games. The questions are largely drawn from information in my book, *Heroic Worlds*, a history of and guide to role-playing games published by Prometheus Books (and available now at a bookstore near you!). If you've read *Heroic Worlds* closely, you should be able to rack up a commendable score, plus you'll be loaded with facts that will keep listeners enthralled at social gatherings of all sorts. (The ability to rack up a commendable score without having read *Heroic Worlds* can only be regarded as evidence of a sadly misspent youth.)

Answers and point scoring are provided on page 88. Got your pencils sharpened?

1. In what year was the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game first published?
2. Which of the following is not a possible player-character profession in the Mayfair Games' edition of the CHILL* game?
 - a. Accountant
 - b. School teacher
 - c. Farmer
 - d. Wage slave
 - e. Cowboy
 - f. Marine biologist
 - g. Circus clown
 - h. Homeless
3. The MONSTERS! MONSTERS!* game was derived from what other game system?
4. Match each DRAGONLANCE® product with its product type:

Product	Product type
A. DRAGONLANCE Saga	a. Graphic novel series
B. DRAGONLANCE Tales	b. Computer game
C. <i>Heroes of the Lance</i>	c. AD&D® adventure gamebook
D. <i>Leaves from the Inn of the Last Home</i>	d. AD&D game module
E. <i>The Soulforge</i>	e. CATACOMBS™ gamebook
F. <i>Mists of Krynn</i>	f. ONE-ON-ONE™ adventure gamebook
G. <i>Gnomes-100, Dragons-0</i>	g. Novel series
H. <i>Dragonwand of Krynn</i>	h. Sourcebook
5. Name the only role-playing system with a skill listing for proctology.
6. Only one of the following fantasy game systems does not have a supplement entitled "Vikings." Which is it?
 - a. AD&D game
 - b. RUNEQUEST* game
 - c. GURPS* game
 - d. WARHAMMER FANTASY ROLEPLAY* game
 - e. ROLEMASTER* game
7. Name the game system that includes the following magic spells: Calming Purr; Shiny Coat; Dog Gone; Hot Dog; Summon Owner; Healing Licks; Stay!
8. Match the following spells with their source publications.

Spells

- A. The Affable Blight of Lord Uni ("This spell causes one target . . . to become infected with a bluish-white fungus. . . (H)e/she dies within two turns unless a spell of Alleviation is applied. . .")
- B. Delouse ("Spell Level: 1. Magic Points: 1. This spell allows the caster to remove parasitic infestations of all kinds from any one creature touched by the Druidic Priest.")
- C. Rotate Body Parts ("Level: Six. Duration: Until dispelled. This enchantment causes the target's body parts to change positions in a random fashion. If the target makes his save, only two body parts exchange positions.")
- D. Two-D'lusion ("The caster creates a two-dimensional illusion of whatever he desires. If any viewer sees it from an angle of more than 45° from its horizontal or vertical viewing axis, the nature of the illusion will be immediately apparent.")
- E. Call of the Void ("When cast, an explosion of complete blackness engulfs the caster and all around him [are] drawn into The Void, a terrible dimension of utter nothingness. . . The

- magician must cut off his own hand to cast this spell....")
- F. Summoning Lesser Demons ("Generally, a sorcerer will need hours of time and much preparation in order to summon a demon.")
- G. The Black Mists of Malnangar ("This dread incantation, authored by the infamous Narishna of Quaran, allows the caster to create a virulent cloud of black magical vapors. Magic resistance vs. SPEED!")
- H. Ecstasy ("Target is in seventh heaven (i.e., extreme ecstasy/joy). For the duration of the spell, he is at 50% of normal activity. Later, he will have a tendency to 'come back for more.' Duration: 1 rd/5% failure.")

Sources

- Unearthed Arcana* (AD&D game)
 - SWORDS & GLORY**, Vol. 2 (EMPIRE OF THE PETAL THRONE* game)
 - The Necromican* (generic fantasy supplement)
 - TALISLANTA** Sorcerer's Guide
 - WARHAMMER FANTASY ROLEPLAY* game
 - FANTASY HERO* game
 - ROLEMASTER* Companion IV
 - STDRLMBRINGER* game
9. One so-called "universal" RPG system includes as an example only one monster description: the argent wombat. Which system was this?
- GURPS* game
 - LEGACY* game
 - ETERNAL SOLDIER* game
 - ROLEPLAYER* game
 - INFINITY* game
 - TWERPS* game
10. List the nine color clearance levels in the PARANOIA* game, in order from lowest to highest.
11. Which two-handed weapon does the most damage in the PHOENIX COMMAND* Hand-to-Hand Combat System.
- Great sword
 - Chair
 - Chain saw, 30"
 - Sledge hammer
 - Mace and chain
12. Match the following best-ever supplement titles with the game system for which they were designed.

Supplement titles

- Lurid Tales of DOOM!*
- Terrible Swift Ford*
- Trail of the Loathsome Slime*
- Rat on a Stick*
- Zombietown U.S.A.*
- Deeds of the Ever-Glorious*
- Drink the Wine of the Moon*
- Mad Monkey vs. The Dragon Claw*

RPG systems

- YSGARTH* game
 - TUNNELS & TROLLS* game
 - GHOSTBUSTERS* game
 - CALL OF CTHULHU* game
 - AD&D® game
 - EMPIRE OF THE PETAL THRONE* game
 - GURPS* game
 - TIMEMASTER* game
13. All of the following names are real titles of role-playing rules systems—except one. Which one is that?
- REALM OF YOLMI* game
 - UUHRAAH!* game
 - MECHA DOGS* game
 - MUTAZOIDS* game
 - THE CRETAN CHRONICLES* game
 - FRINGEWORTHY* game
14. Link the name of each RPG system with the fact appropriate to it.

RPG systems

- DRAGONQUEST® game
- DRAGONRAID* game
- DRAGONROAR* game
- DRAGON WARRIORS* game
- GOLDEN DRAGON* game

Facts

- Mostly for miniatures; includes a giant hedgehog on its monster list.
- British game system released as four mass-market paperbacks.
- Players have their heroes cast spells by reciting memorized passages from the Bible.
- Six-volume solo gamebook series of standard dungeon crawls.
- Its Grievous Injury Table includes: "You have been eviscerated!"

15. Which item on the following list is not a skill in the ALMA MATER* high-school role-playing game?
- Cheating
 - Crudeness
 - Drug Use
 - Lying
 - Psychic Awareness
 - Studying
16. Which of the following was the first AD&D module ever published?
- D1 *Descent Into the Depths of the Earth*
 - G1 *Steading of the Hill Giant Chief*
 - S1 *Tomb of Horrors*
 - T1 *Village of Homlet*
17. In the CYBORG COMMANDO* game, when you roll two ten-sided dice, how do you read them?
- Multiply one die by the other
 - Add them together
 - Percentile style (d100)
 - Subtract lower score from higher score
18. In the amazing WORLD ACTION AND ADVENTURE* game system, the player's character (or Actor) is based on the player's real self to an extent that varies depending on the character type chosen. Match the following character types from this game with their descriptions:
- | | |
|------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A. Full-Self | a. The character can be completely different from the player, except physically. |
| B. New-Self | b. The character can actually be completely different from the player. |
| C. Moral-Self | c. The character is just like the player, except for a couple of changes. |
| D. Physical-Self | d. The character can be completely different from the player, except morally. |
| E. Non-Self | e. The character is exactly like the player in every way. |
19. Which one of the following has never won a Best Role-Playing Rules award at the annual ORIGINS* game convention?
- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| a. AD&D game | e. BEHIND ENEMY LINES* game |
| b. COMMANDO game | f. DRAGONQUEST game |
| c. D&D® game | g. GAMMA WORLD® game |
| d. PARANOIA* game | h. TWILIGHT 2000* game |
20. Only one role-playing game, in the interest of being more realistic and lifelike, includes Body Roll Charts that enable you to personalize your character by random acquisition of such traits as: hunchback; clubfoot; bald; periscoping vision ("Character can see around corners"); independent eye movement; sense of position ("Character can tell his position in relation to nearby things with a successful Save Roll"); and enlarged part of the body ("Character must make [a] die roll . . . to see which part of the body is enlarged"). That game is:
- FIELD GUIDE TO ENCOUNTERS* game
 - GURPS* game
 - ROLEMASTER* game
 - METAMORPHOSIS
 - SPAWN OF FASHAN* game
 - TORC* game

The VOYAGE of the PRINCESS ARK

Part 24: The lords of the forest

by Bruce A. Heard

This series chronicles the adventures of an Alphatian explorer and his crew as they journey across the D&D® Known World in their skyship. The information herein may be used to expand D&D campaigns using the Gazetteer series.

**From the Journals of
prince haldemar of haaken
Lord admiral of the mightiest Empire
Captain of the Ever-Victorious
princess ark
Imperial Explorer, etc. etc.**

Burymir 14, AY 2000: We had been flying over a previously unknown kingdom the day before, west of a small Vilverdan colony. In the evening, we observed a large city near a forest, probably the capital of this region. Great beauty graced this city's all-wooden architecture, so I decided to have a closer look. Talasar, Myojo, Nyanga, and I landed just before dawn this morning, a few miles north in the forest. The rumblings of a storm echoed in the dark. The *Princess* remained up in the sky, watching for Heldannic Warbirds among the clouds; since Raman's battle last week, there had been no further sign of them. I put Xerdon in charge, with Raman at his side for in-depth combat training.

No sooner had we had set foot in this misty forest than the sound of a battle

arose. The clang of metal and the mighty roar of a monster echoed through the woods. We hurried to investigate. In a small clearing stood a red dragon, poised to release its fiery breath at a gallant knight clothed in green. The raging storm of fire fell upon the man as he plunged his blade into the beast's crimson-scaled hide. The knight fell to his knees—alive, but just barely. Horrified by the spectacle, we reached for our weapons, hoping to aid the knight. Suddenly, I felt the cold edge of a blade under my throat. "Move not, strangers," spoke a cool voice, "for this is not your battle." I glanced over and saw the warning came from another knight.

Six other knights appeared around us. They all wore the same green garb and armor as the noble warrior in the clearing. We were evidently not to be killed, so our attention went back to the fight. The dragon pawed at the sword stuck in its chest, trying to rip it out. It prepared to breathe again. Raising both hands toward the sky, the knight chanted a vigorous psalm. Lightning suddenly flashed and struck the sword's pommel, driving the searing electricity straight into the wyrm's heart. The dragon coiled and uncoiled in agony. Finally, roaring its pain at the thunder, the beast fell heavily to the ground.

This knight was not an elf, nor had he uttered a paladin's spell. What magic was this that allowed a knight to strike this dragon so deadly a blow from the skies?

At that moment, a curious character walked up to the knight. Bare-chested, wearing only striped breeches and a red cloak, the newcomer threw a golden braid back over his shoulder and began to play a lyre while reciting a poem, an ode of a sort:

"King Edwix had but one dread,

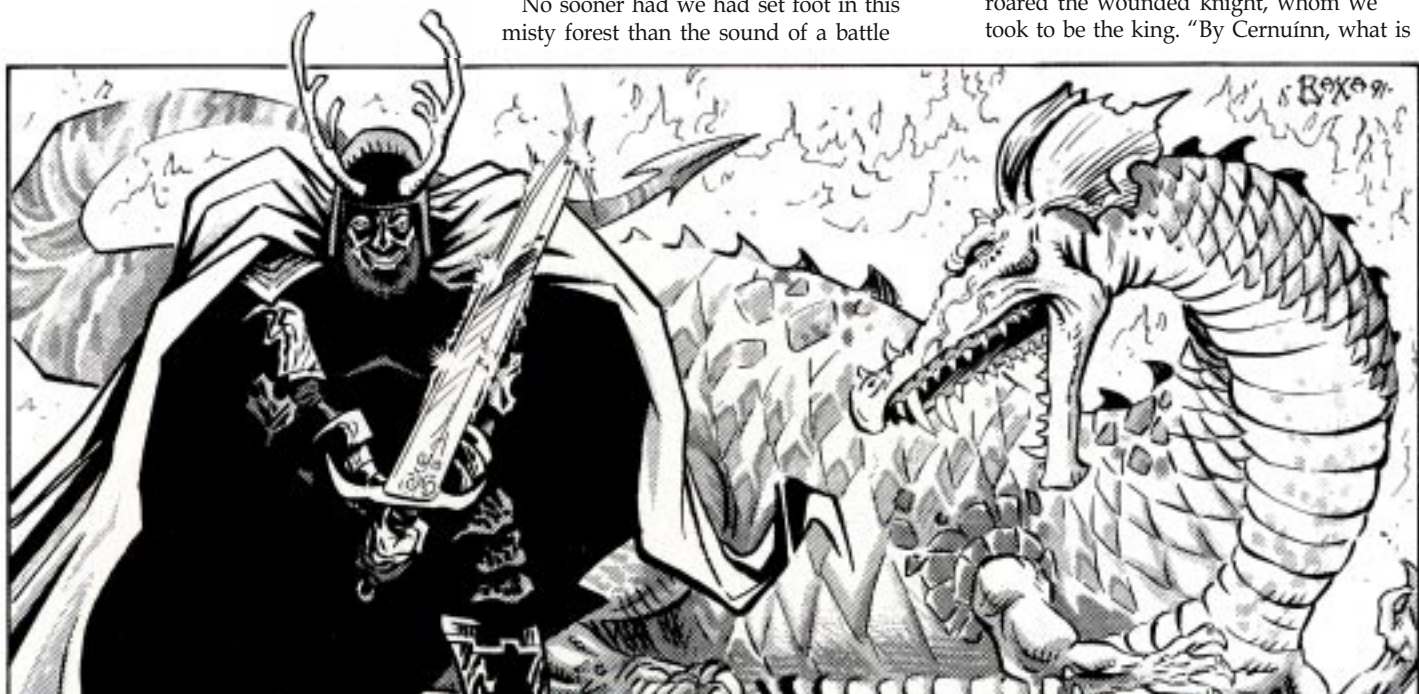
"That fell the sky on his head.

"But fall it'll not by 'morrow,

"So fear naught, O Night Harrow."

Rain suddenly began to fall.

"Will you shut up, you blasted idiot?" roared the wounded knight, whom we took to be the king. "By Cernuinn, what is





it with you? Have you signed a pact with Taranos to drown us all in his rain?" Vexed, the bard stuck up his nose and walked away.

Clearing his throat, the knight before me put his sword away and added, "King Edwix does get rather punchy in the morning!" Indeed.

The king finally stood up and returned, wounded and burned, to his knights. He was either a powerful man or very lucky. "Who are you, strangers?" he asked.

"Prince Haldemar of Alphatia, and my escort," I replied.

"Eh? Never heard of it," grumbled the king. "I am tired. Follow me to my camp."

I could not help admiring the workmanship of the king's armor. Tiny leaves and branches were delicately carved into the plates. Then I realized this was no metal armor; it looked more like wood, perhaps petrified or somehow turned into metal. In fact, all these knights wore the same style of armor, and their weapons, too, were made of that odd iron. Dark green cloaks concealed the men well, except for the cloaks' delicate golden trim or the occasional glint of armor. Their helms all bore large deer antlers, and in the eerie morning mist they looked like surreal creatures of the forest. Without waiting, the knights and their king all rode away.

The bard alone remained. "They always do that," he said, "but don't let that intimidate you, my lord. They enjoy playing hard to get. Comes with the antlers. I guess we'll have to walk, then." With an inspired sigh, he added, "Might I compose a sonnet for our journey back to the royal camp?"

"Er, thank you, but no. We've already had our morning ballad, truly."

"Oh," he sniffed, disappointed.

On our way to the camp, our new friend and guide, the bard Voxpopulix, told us more about our bizarre encounter. The king was on a quest. Druidic tradition demanded that he return to the hallowed forest to meet his end should he fail his duty. He had until next summer's druids' gathering to complete his quest. He had to do so alone, without help from anyone, to prove his valor. This was very serious business for the druids. In this case, he was to slay a mother dragon, Greudnax. The one he had destroyed this morning was her daughter. The king was still seeking Greudnax's secret lair.

It soon became clear we were well inside the druids' hallowed forest. This caused great discomfort to both Talasar and Nyanga. My first officer detested treading uninvited upon others' sacred grounds; Nyanga had a great respect for things of nature, especially forest spirits.

A billowing fog rose from the ground. It was so thick it could only be someone's uncanny magic. Suddenly, a net fell from above. We were captured with ease; within minutes, we and our bard friend stood before the druids.

The druids were angered. Bound and

gagged, we were brought to the sanctum sanctorum, the heart of the Great Druidess' hallowed grove. As we quickly learned, no one but a druid was allowed to enter the sacred woods. Until late that day, a crowd of druids debated on whether to sacrifice us to the Immortal Breig or the Immortal Cernuinn—by the sickle or by the cauldron. At last, the Great Druidess questioned Voxpopulix. Our situation greatly improved when they learned that the king had invited us to his camp after defeating Greudnax's daughter. Since we had a legitimate reason for being in this forest, they chose to set us free—up to a point, that is.

Talasar and Nyanga—why did it have to be them?—were kept as hostages. Myojo, Voxpopulix, and I were free to leave. We had until the next moon to accomplish our business; only then would the hostages be released. I had no quarrel with the Great Druidess of this kingdom, nor did I desire one. Since druids show only limited respect for foreign nobility, negotiation was of little help, and violence was out of the question. At Voxpopulix's insistence, we left without further argument. He feared for our safety, for the druids could be cruel when offended. Clearly, our presence was offensive.

Burymir 15: At last, we made it to the camp—but it was empty. Someone had ransacked it. Voxpopulix pulled a black arrow from one of the tents. "Cassivellonius—a northern orc tribe," he said. "What are they doing here?" It was hard to tell whether the king had been caught.

Their tracks in the wet soil were easy to follow. We had been trailing the orcs for hours when, inexplicably, the tracks ended. There, a small path seemed to wind through the thicket. I suspected an ambush when I heard leaves rustle. I could have sworn someone whispered my name, but it could not have been one of my companions. Myojo readied his great bow, expecting the worst, when a majestic stag stepped out of the bushes. It calmly gazed at us, then sprang back into the brush.

This couldn't be the orcs' doing. We followed. The stag appeared a few more times, always at a fair distance ahead. Oddly, every time I glanced back, I could no longer see the path we had followed. Obviously, we were being led somewhere. Fog rose again, muffling sounds and masking our sight.

Suddenly, in a swirl of the mist, a shape walked by, ignoring us completely. Grotesque and hunched, the figure snorted and cursed in a guttural voice. Myojo was ready, knee to the ground and arrow cocked. Voxpopulix was nowhere to be seen. Naturally, my wand found its way into my hand.

The fog dissipated somewhat, revealing about 30 orcs and a chieftain crouching behind bushes in a narrow gully, watching the tracks they had left earlier. Their scouts had probably spotted us earlier, and their chieftain had set up an ambush. The

mysterious path, however, had lead us to the orcs' left flank, at one end of the gully. We were perfectly set to attack.

Pandemonium and panic ensued as my lightning bolt struck their packed ranks. Many of the orcs died instantly. The survivors quickly scattered, running for cover. A deadly game of hide-and-seek followed, with enraged orcs sporadically charging out from hiding places. They quickly fell to Myojo's arrows or to his swirling silver blade.

I smelled the foul breath of an orc behind me, but it fell dead into my arms when I turned around. With a wink, Voxpopulix wiped his elegant ivory blade on the orc's garb. He had been hiding behind me, in the shade of the undergrowth. A curious character, indeed!

Soon enough, the few remaining orcs retreated and vanished into the forest. They left a prisoner behind them—one of the king's knights. His companions had all died while delaying the orcs, he said. The orcs had learned about the king's quest and had come to capture him. The king barely had enough time to escape and continue his quest—truly alone this time.

There was no time to waste. I had to find the king. Surely, there must have been more orcs around. It would serve no good purpose if the king died now. Voxpopulix and the knight argued against intervening; Almighty Breig would watch over him, they said. In a pig's eye! No Immortal is worth three feet of cold steel and good magic to boot when it comes to orcs. This was war!

Burymir 15—Talasar, from a later account: "And what sort of a cleric are you, stranger?" the young druid asked. The apprentice had been observing me for some time, clearly impressed with my hammer. "Do you honor Tuatis?"

I gathered that Tuatis was the local name for Thor, a powerful Immortal in the north, patron of wars. The young druid, Cucurbita (Pepo to his friends), proudly showed me his own wooden war mallet, a rather large one that he had used to crush several orcish heads in the past.

As we spoke, another druid came running down a path. He brought news of a nearby fire in the woods, obviously the work of Greudnax the dragon. The hour was grave; everyone marched toward the blaze. Neither Nyanga or I wanted to stay behind, and so we joined in the effort. The druids displayed great skill and magic in fighting the fire. Fortunately, my hammer could extinguish flames, too. I had used it to this effect a number of times on wooden ships. Its magic is potent.

This impressed the druids tremendously. Later in the night when the fire was contained, the Great Druidess declared, "Priest of Razud, the iron in your hammer we dislike, but its power to smother fire is a good portent. Your help was precious to us. You and your friend warrior are free to come and go as you please until the return of your companions."

Pepo stood by me, his hand on my shoulder. "He's my friend!" he said proudly. I guess we won't end up being nailed to an oak after all.

Burymir 16—Haldemar: The knight, Ariovix, woke me up when he jumped from a branch in a tree. "There was fire in the south last night," he said. "It was Greudnax's work, but the druids smothered it. I heard the dragon fly by just after sunset. Her lair could be close. Breig must have guided us here."

Indeed, we found a cavern by sunrise. The ground had collapsed recently, opening an entrance to a deep cave. The dragon must have moved there no more than a few months ago.

Voxpopulix and Ariovix refused to go any farther. If the dragon was there, so was the king, and this dragon was the object of the king's quest before Almighty Breig. I could not convince them otherwise. Myojo and I moved on.

We reached a ledge overlooking a deep cavern. The king was at the bottom. When he saw us, he yanked down the grappling hook he had used to climb down, denying us a way to reach him. Brandishing his sword, he shouted, "Return whence you came, wizard! She's mine!"

As I pondered on a way to help, we heard a beastly breathing from the sky. The dragon was flying back from a night of devastation. I hoped she had expended her fire.

Greudnax landed nearby, then crawled and slithered past without noticing us. The king ducked behind a rock. Within moments, Greudnax coiled up in a corner of the cave and fell asleep.

The king left his hiding place and began to move toward the dragon, his sword out. Movement caught my eye then. Above the king, on a ledge, an orc was watching. I saw the humanoid open his mouth to warn Greudnax—but his breath was cut short when one of Myojo's arrows struck him in the head. He slumped silently.

Greudnax snorted, then sniffed. She opened an eye, just enough to see what was happening. From where he stood, the king could not have noticed the dragon's awakening. With a spell of *ventriloquism*, I whispered a word of warning to the king. He responded with an angry look in my direction.

Suddenly, the dragon's head whipped toward the king. The king was ready for her. With his heavy broadsword, he hacked off a piece of the dragon's lip, infuriating the wyrm. Her cavernous roar was a deafening, blood-curdling sound.

Scores of orcs appeared on the ledge, alerted by the dragon. They encountered Myojo and me instead. We barely succeeded in stopping their assault, using spells and arrows. The orcs came in waves, indifferent to their casualties. Meanwhile, the king was engaged in a heroic fight against Greudnax. Several times Greudnax nearly caught and swallowed him whole, but always he managed to avoid her lethal

bite. He was a true warrior.

In desperation, Greudnax reared back and breathed a vast cone of red flame upon the king. The monster had fire left inside her! The dragon's thunderous laughter shook the cavern as the king cried out in agony, wreathed in flames. The dragon turned toward us and thundered, "You are next, wizard!" I lifted my wand at Greudnax, meaning to *disintegrate* her ugly head.

"No! Leave her to me!" cried the king. Limping and bearing horrible burns, he dragged his sword behind him as he staggered into battle. "'Twas I who slew thy daughter, evil beast! And I shall slay thee, as well!"

The dragon glanced at the wounded king and brushed him away with her tail. Greudnax turned calmly back toward me. "Go ahead, wizard. Use your wand, if you dare! Slay me, and you'll sentence your king to death as well."

What could I do? Either I slaughtered this wyrm and the king would have to die before the Great Druidess, or I didn't—and the dragon would certainly kill the king then. Either way, the king was a dead man. I supposed that I could talk some sense into these superstitious druids later on. So be it.

"Well, old wizard, I want your answer," taunted the dragon. "Hesitating, are we?"

I drew myself up. "It seems my choices are limited indeed, dear Greudnax, but you know—I really don't care!" I raised my wand and aimed right at Greudnax's head.

At my answer, the dragon opened her eyes wide in astonishment. Ah, but this was one lucky beast. With horror, I saw my magic strike the monster—then fizzled and gurgled as it liquefied on the dragon's scales, dripping to the ground as nauseating, putrid ectoplasm. My wand should have *disintegrated* the beast—but she had resisted it. She laughed again and cried, "Now you are mine!"

She took a deep breath, ready to fry Myojo and me, when suddenly the king stood up before her and stabbed his sword into the dragon's neck. Valiantly, the king twisted the blade in the wound and, ripping a gash through her scales, jammed it up to the hilt into the dragon's throat. Deep in shock, Greudnax had to release the fiery storm she had built up inside her chest. She turned and breathed heavily at the king, but no infernal blaze shot forth. Instead, a few flames hissed and sizzled through her throat wound. Then, unexpectedly, Greudnax's entire chest blew up, sending flesh, ribs, scales, and bits of incandescent ichor flying through the cavern at us all.

So died the red dragon Greudnax at the hands of King Edwix I, the Night Harrow.

Burymir 17—Talasar, from a later account: I witnessed a strange activity among the druids. Immediately after a messenger arrived, the druids sacrificed a lamb. They spilled its blood into a large cauldron, which the Great Druidess then

used as a *crystal ball*. There, in the troubled fluid, she saw the mangled carcass of a red dragon. Beside it stood an orc chief. He dipped his sword into the beast's ichor, raised it, and with ugly cries exhorted his followers to revenge. I assumed that the king's quest had been successful.

For the next several hours, the druids worked around the cauldron, bringing various ingredients from the forest. When the brew was ready, the Great Druidess blessed it, and all present partook of the beverage. Nyanga and I were invited to join. It gave us strength, so much that I could wield my hammer with unusual ease. The druids planned to battle the orcs, and there would be no survivors among the defeated. We set out at once.

By nightfall, we had reached the savage horde. The battle was brief but deadly. Against us were many hundreds of orcs, ogres, and trolls. The orcs, infuriated by the death of their living idol, showed no fear of the druids and displayed great cunning in their tactics. Despite their knowledge of the forest and their powers over the forces of nature, many druids died. Pepo did well with his wooden mallet, and I saw him bash to death an ogre who hadn't seen him coming.

At the height of the battle, something odd happened. The sound of a hunting horn echoed through the forest. Fog rose from the ground, allowing our force to retreat up a small hill. Suddenly, bears, eagles, stags, boars, wild cats, black wolves, and even clouds of buzzing insects charged the orcs. Leading them was a ghostly knight with antlers.

Buckling before the wild charge, the orcish horde finally escaped down a small trail. I learned later that spirits of the forest had changed the path and led the orcs to a deadly cliff. No one could see far in the mist, and the entire horde met its doom over the ravine's jagged rocks.

Burymir 18—Haldemar: Ariovix and Voxpopulix somberly carried their wounded king. He hadn't uttered a single word since his battle against Greudnax. The other two said little more. By luck, we saw no sign of the orcs. We reached the druids' camp this inglorious afternoon.

The Great Druidess was waiting, standing among her entourage. Ariovix helped the king to his feet. "Great Druidess," he said, "the time has come to return to thee my father's sword and shield, for I have sinned in my quest. The beast has died, but fate allowed the hand of strangers to disgrace my endeavor. And for this, I long to embrace the spirit of Breig."

Whispers rose among the druids. "The honor is yours, Edwix, son of Othual. You have done well. The land flourished under your rule, and so will it bloom again. Your wish will be granted, O King of Robrenn."

I couldn't believe what I was hearing. How could they part with such a great man? All this clerical mumbo-jumbo irritated me to no end. A horrible feeling of guilt and doubt clutched my heart. Des-



The Tome of the Beast: THE MEDIEVAL BESTIARY

"The Chimaera is a dire creature with the fierce forequarters of a Lion, the lank body of a Goat, and the writhing tail of a Dragon. Some scholars believe that each section has its own head but I know this to be mere myth. In either case, this vile creature is known to breathe brimstone-laden flames, and is a most Sisyphean creature to slay due to its ferocity and cunning."

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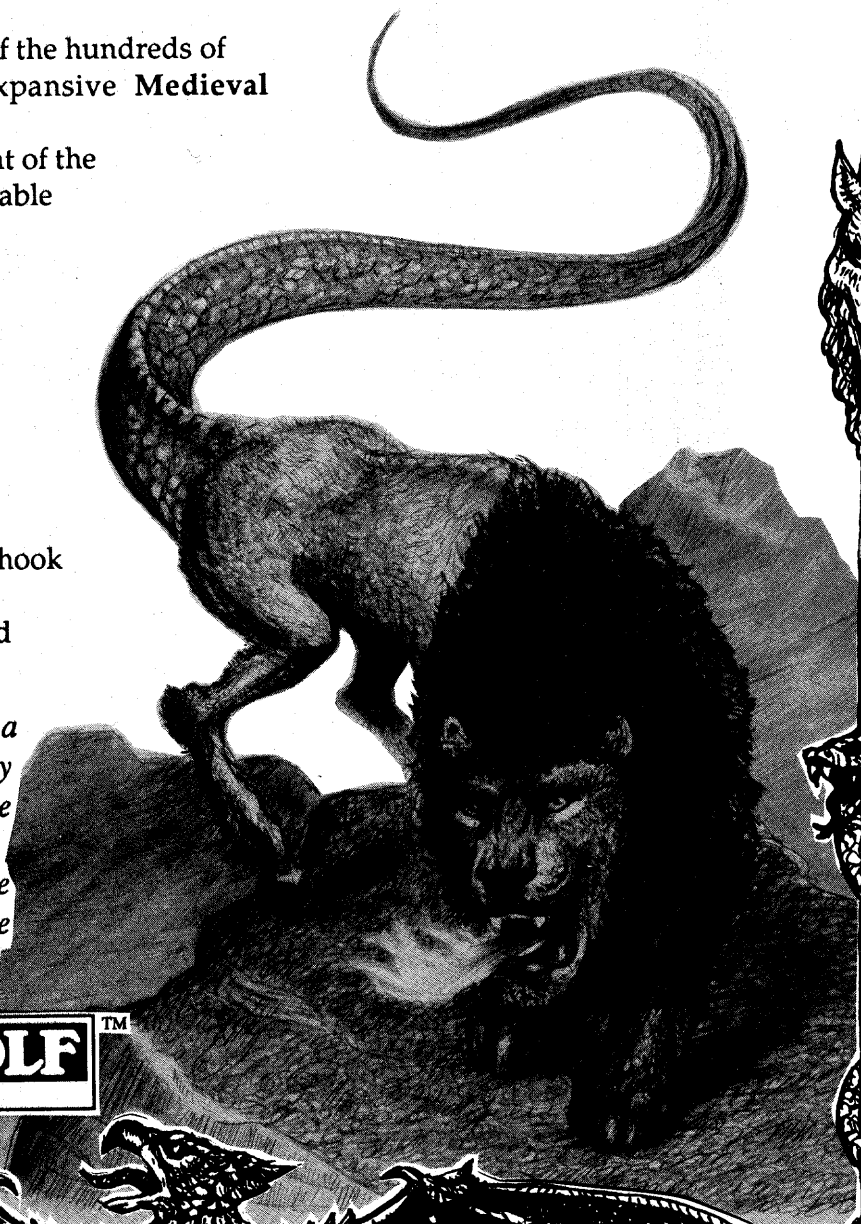
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perate, I stepped forward and cried, "Great Druidess! I must respectfully object!"

Angry muttering rippled through the gathering, but I plunged on. "I ask you, who else but Almighty Breig could have led us to defeat your foes? Was it not She who cleared the way to King Edwix? Was it not She who guided my hand at the heart of the battle? This was Her will. I see no disgrace here!"

The Great Druidess silenced the crowd. "Your intentions are noble, O Wizard, but this is not our way. There are other matters than the death of a beast. In time, all that lives shall die, and all that died shall be reborn. Indeed, it was Breig who guided your hand—but She desires he who embodies Her land to stand by Her side. You shall take the sword, the shield, and the story of Edwix to his palace at Eyf, and present them to the son of the Night Harrow, for it is time for him to be king."

Burymir 20: It was with no pleasure that I greeted the rising sun this day. Ariovix led us to the great hall at Eyf, where we met the king's son. Our host knew what to expect when he saw his father's sword and shield.

My actions caused this young man's sorrow, and I was powerless to ease his pain. He took the sword and shield and placed them before the throne. He then gazed into my eyes, looking for a sign, but it was he who bore the sign, for I could see in his eyes the dark, intense look of his father. Truly, the father was reborn.

The young monarch finally left to mourn. I was lost in sad thoughts when I felt a hand on my shoulder. Ariovix stood by me. "Grieve not, my lord. You listened to your heart. You who scorn the Immortals should understand that they weave your fate and wove that of others before you." He handed me a braid of black hair, bound in a golden cap. "He wanted you to have this, and remember. Leave in peace, O Prince."

"At the song of a mage
"She roared all her rage,
"But the daughter of Nyf
"By a king met her blight.

"As her blood soaked the earth
"A new lord saw his birth,
"For the King of Robrenn
"In Breig's arms shall remain."

To be continued...

The Confederated Kingdom of Robrenn

Robrenn—Capital: Eyf (Pop.: 25,200—humans, demihumans, some woodland beings); **Ruler:** King Edwix II, son of "The Night Harrow"; royal lands include all of the Hallowed Carnuilh Forest.

Robrenn is a confederation of sovereign dominions. The people of the present kingdom are descended from ancient barbarian tribes that moved to this region

after fleeing the marching armies of Hule, far to the north. The fair climate and generous forests were a boon to this druidic society. The braided warriors thrived, though over the centuries their barbaric culture ebbed before a new age. The tribal chiefs formed a nobility that allowed a feudal system to progressively replace the tribal structure. With the druids' guidance, the nobles then formed a confederacy under the rulership of a new king, Robrenn I, chosen by the druids.

Since then, Robrenn's descendants inherited his title. Should his lineage become extinct, the druids would then choose one of the current nobles as the new ruler. In all other respects, this is a feudal society, with the druids replacing the more traditional clerics. Nobility and knights must swear allegiance to the ruler and follow the ways of the druids.

Men and women are of equal importance in this society. It is the belief of the Robrenn that their chief patron Immortal, Breig, is the mother of nature. As a result, the highest functions among the druids are often limited to women. However, in order to maintain universal balance, right of birth usually (but not exclusively) favors males. For example, the first-born male has priority over a female in the succession for a nobility title or the ownership of a family heirloom. In general, all that is mystical or linked to nature and creation is the realm of women; all that is material or linked to warfare and destruction is the realm of men.

The Confederacy maintains a small standing army, the Guard, to enforce its laws and guard its borders. A vast reserve of trained and armed citizens also exists. The druids provide a set of weapons and armor to each family's first child, when he or she comes of age at puberty. If a female, the child bears the right to refuse the weapons only if young male exists in the family.

This "chosen one" must leave the family and remain with the Confederacy's Guard to learn the art of war. Three years later, the young adult earns the title of "armed citizen" and may return home. Once a year, an armed citizen must provide a month of military service to the Confederacy, to support its defense and to be ready for war. In times of war, all armed citizens must join the Guard until the threat is gone. When an armed citizen dies, the deceased warrior's weapons and armor go to the family's next in line (if old enough), who is placed under the guidance of the druids. If no heir exist, the druids keep the equipment until another chosen one comes of age.

The druids systematically enforce this system, sometimes quite ruthlessly. Any perceived lack of enthusiasm or poor physical fitness can lead a citizen to be banished or sacrificed to the Immortal Taranos. The Robrenn are a fierce and brave people. It was their personality more than any need for warriors that led

to the creation of these laws; thus, few actually resent them. Becoming a chosen one is a sign of honor. In this society, knights can rise only among the ranks of armed citizens.

Druids are eminently powerful among the nobility; they make the laws and decide on the penalties. Nobles are responsible for enforcing these laws. The Great Druidess also may name which noble is to succeed a king when his dynasty is extinct. Only a legitimate wife, son, or daughter may succeed a king. If none are alive, the druids intervene.

The druids also permit, disallow, or even demand that armed conflicts be started or specific battles occur. Druids affect the Confederacy's ability to attack another realm, or the ability of two dominions to fight each other. The latter is permissible in the case of a dispute between two nobles of the Confederacy that the druids cannot resolve. Considering the deeply rooted respect this society has for druids, disobeying them is almost unheard of and could lead to a civil war.

A thick forest covers a vast area of the Confederacy; this is the druids' Hallowed Forest of Carnuilh. It is a sanctified area that no one but the druids may enter. At its center is a holy grove where the druids meet once a year, on midsummer's eve. There, they discuss mystic topics, consult auguries, and resolve problems.

Every 12 years of continuous rulership, the king of Robrenn must go on a quest. If he succeeds, he remains king for another 12 years. If he fails, he must seek the Great Druidess's grove in the Hallowed Forest of Carnuilh. Legends say that he returns to the earth that he embodies, thereby allowing the land to flourish again. He is magically "absorbed" by the forest, thus ending his life in this world. No succession may take place until the king dies or returns to meet his fate. If he flees in shame and dies elsewhere without fulfilling his duty at the grove, years of hardship may threaten the kingdom.

The Robrenn honor a wide variety of Immortals. Their belief is that all life came from Breig, also known as the Mother of Nature, the Great Oak, and the Spirit of Eyf. She heads the Robrenn pantheon. Although a druid may choose one Immortal over another as his or her primary patron, they all meet at Carnuilh. Regardless of their individual philosophies, all druids follow the same basic principles that maintain their coherence as a mystical order. They all revere the Great Druidess Maud, daughter of Trestana. Maud is a follower of Breig. There may be other Great Druids elsewhere in the world, but, as far as the Robrenn are concerned, Maud's the only one. There have been few male Great Druids in Robrenn's past; women have commonly held this position.

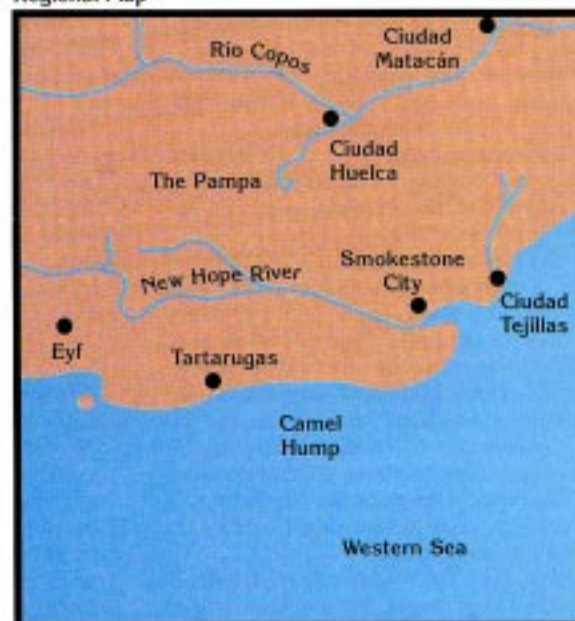
Much of Robrenn lore is spoken. Little has been written down (although the people are literate), because the druids believe that the memorizing of legends



Scale: one hex equals 8 miles



Regional Map



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and prayers sharpens the mind and prevents their holy knowledge from being vulgarized by ink and vellum, and thus possibly misused. Bardic tradition enables history to be told, establishing the bard as a key element of the Robrenn culture.

Much of this culture is affected by the druids' dislike of all that "never lived." This distaste includes man-made objects of metal or stone; the druids prefer wood, leather, cloth, etc. This practice has prevented the Robrenn from building much with stone. Their forts and towns are usually made of wood, with very little stone except for fireplaces or roads. This has been the source of many disasters, especially in times of war.

The plateaus to the north of the Robrenn teem with orcs and ogres. Armed horsemen constantly patrol the northern edge of the Confederacy, watching for invasions in the making. A number of murderous wars with the humanoids have nearly ruined the Confederacy, and great attention is paid to this threat.

As the centuries passed, the Robrenn developed trade with other nations, especially with Texeiran and Vilaverdan merchants. Robrenn exports wine, mead, sausage, corn, wheat, medicinal herbs and potions, spices, and amber. Red steel is of no interest to them. They would rather obtain payment in serfs, to be used as a labor force for the nobles; Guardianio tradesmen will indeed trade common criminals for goods. Silver is otherwise acceptable, which Robrenn need for their coinage.

The Robrenn pantheon

Breig: (alias Ordana)—She is the Mother of Forests, Patron of Robrenn, and head of the pantheon. Her philosophy allows only female druids, though men and particularly elves follow her precepts.

Arduinna: (alias Diulanna)—Her sphere of interest includes willpower, archery, and hunting. Her philosophy is restricted to female druids.

Belnos: (alias Asterius)—The patron of healers, trade, and journeys abroad, Belnos is popular among halflings.

Belsamas: (alias Kagyar)—He governs the art of forging, metalworking, and construction. He is a common patron of the dwarves.

Cernuinn: (alias Faunus)—An important figure among the Robrenn pantheon, Cernuinn is often represented as a tall man with either the head or antlers of a deer. He governs the sphere of forests, songs, poetry, and bards, and is also the patron of woodland beings. Some say that all male Robrenn are related to him.

Leug: (alias Zirchev)—A fairly recent figure among the Robrenn pantheon, Leug's interests include demihumans, wisdom, and the arts.

Nyt: (alias Hell)—Although no druids follow her precepts, Nyt is acknowledged as part of the beginning and the end of all. Naturally, Nyt's interests are death and

reincarnation.

Taranos: (alias Odin/Wotan)—Master of the skies, storms, and mighty lightnings, this Immortal is not as influential among the Robrenn as he would be in the Known World's Northern Reaches.

Tuatis: (alias Thor)—An old-time favorite of the Robrenn, Tuatis remains the warriors' patron, the unchallenged lord of wars and bravery.

The Confederated Dominions

Duchy of Avernos—Symbol: Boar; Capital: Arax (Pop.: 8,500—humans and dwarves); Ruler: Duke Blergix the Tall, son of Medonix; Typical NPC: blacksmith; Patrons: Belsamas or Tuatis.

County of Morguen—Symbol: Deer; Capital: Cernumna (Pop.: 13,700—humans, halflings, and elves); Ruler: Countess Onnena the Sylvan, daughter of Subellos; Typical NPC: druid sage; Patrons: Breig or Cernuinn.

County of Suerba—Symbol: Rooster; Capital: Ogmna (Pop.: 4,800—humans and elves); Ruler: Count Brevoel the Swift, son of Maloel; Typical NPC: champion archer; Patrons: Arduinna or Leug.

Barony of Avarica—Symbol: Raven; Capital: Dubrax (Pop.: 9,800—mostly humans); Ruler: Baron Eusgetorix the Stormy, son of Aduatucas; Typical NPC: adventurous bard; Patrons: Cernuinn or Leug.

Barony of Nemausa—Symbol: Auroch; Capital: Morigamna (Pop.: 11,200—mostly humans); Ruler: Baron Calturix the Bloodthirsty, son of Demiatix; Typical NPC: fearless horseman; Patrons: Breig or Tuatis.

Barony of Sedhuen—Symbol: Ram; Capital: Venatis (Pop.: 14,900—mostly humans); Ruler: Baron Teuthoel the Merciful, son of Trestana; Typical NPC: peaceful farmer; Patrons: Breig or Belnos.

Barony of Uthuinn—Symbol: Ship; Capital: Senerobriva (Pop.: 3,700—humans and halflings); Ruler: Baroness Brivaela the Sagacious, daughter of Clothual; Typical NPC: quiet fisherman; Patrons: Belnos or Taranos.

Robrenn druids

Robrenn druids start as druids at level 1 (use the Cleric Experience Table in the D&D rules). Druidic spells are available immediately from level 2 on. All usual druidic limitations apply. Druids must have the Nature Lore and Ceremony skills. Their next available skill choices must be used to acquire the following skills: Healing, Snare, Survival, and Tracking. At level 3 and higher, Robrenn druids must meet at the Hallowed Forest of Carnuilh during the midsummer's eve celebration.

At 10th level, a druid becomes immune to poison and gains the use of the charm plant spell (see the 7th-level wizard spell). At 20th level, a druid can use his cauldron as a crystal balls. When reaching the Circle of Nine at 30th level, a druid can create a magical torc used by that druid alone. It allows the druid to *shapechange* into any

nonmagical woodland animal. The druid can do this at will, back and forth, any reasonable amount of equipment appearing with the druid when regaining his or her normal shape.

Unless there is a vacant spot among the Circle of Nine (at 30th level or above), the druids eligible to fill that position must compete with each other to advance in levels. The druids do so by inventing new druidic spells or potions, or furthering the druidic cause during quests, by returning a long-lost relic to the grove, etc. All the druids from the Circle of Nine and above (except the petitioners) vote for the best achievement during a special gathering at the Hallowed Forest of Carnuilh.

Upon reaching 3,500,000 XP (or death), the Great Druid of Robrenn becomes one with the hallowed forest, effectively ending life in this world. Depending on the campaign, the dying Great Druid either attains Immortality (if eligible) or becomes a forest spirit (at the DM's discretion). A forest spirit has a cumulative 10% chance per day of spotting visitors in its assigned forest. Some of the physical manifestations of these spirits include unicorns and spell-casting dryads (for female druids) or spell-casting treants and actaeons (for male druids). Forest spirits can cast any spell from the druidic spell list once per hour; they can also cause paths to change, leaves to whisper messages, fog to rise, or animals to act in certain ways (such as helping a lost party find its way or attacking unwanted visitors with up to 12 HD of animals per hour, etc.). Forest spirits can only be destroyed if their entire forests are razed to the ground.

New druidic spells

Ironwood (5th-level druidic spell)

Range: Touch

Duration: Permanent

Effect: Wooden objects

This spell bestows the strength and flexibility of metal to wood, without altering its appearance. It can affect objects up to 1,000 cu ft of encumbrance. It is traditionally used to create one set of armor or one weapon for a druidic knight, often with the help of a warp wood spell. This spell cannot affect magically enchanted items made of wood.

Seasons (6th-level druidic spell)

Range: Touch

Duration: 1 turn

Effect: Undead within a 60' radius indoors, or undead within a 180' radius outdoors

The spell is used to destroy or neutralize undead monsters. The season of the year determines its effect, which is not under the druid's control.

Spring—This causes 1d8 points of damage per round of exposure to all undead in the area of effect (no save). Humanoid



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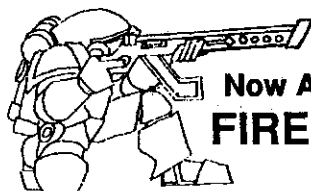
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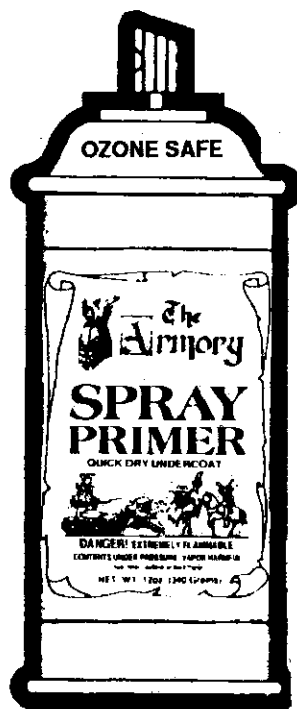
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undead reaching 0 hp are "revived"—that is, **raised** from the dead at their lowest-possible experience levels or Hit Dice, and with no relevant memories of their past. Revived creatures become servants of the druid, as if magically charmed.

Summer—This creates an area of blinding magical sunlight, burning undead creatures exposed to the area of effect at the rate of 1d8 points of damage per round of exposure (no save). A vampire caught in this light will flee immediately (no save) and not return until fully rested.

Autumn—Each undead caught in the area of effect must make a saving throw each round of exposure. A failed saving throw causes an undead to wither, dropping various parts of its body (if material) or fading away (if immaterial). Each failed saving throw reduces any undead's hit points by one-quarter (rounded down).

Winter—Each undead caught in the area of effect must make a saving throw each round of exposure. A failed saving throw causes an undead to go dormant until the next full moon.

Druidic knights

Only neutral traveling fighters may become druidic knights. They must have adopted the philosophy of the druids prior to reaching knighthood and must swear fealty to a prince, king, or emperor faithful to the ways of the druids. A druidic knight may not wield metallic weapons nor wear metallic armor and shields. The knight must use wooden armor and weapons magically shaped and hardened by the druids. These items are usually lacquered or varnished, and include curvilinear decorations, delicate leaf carvings, and fine scrollwork tooled into the wood. The knight must repay the druids for these precious items, usually in terms of several years of routine service when not called upon by a liege.

In addition to all obligations and advantages common to knights, a druidic knight also has the following abilities:

—A knight can detect **danger** (as per the druidic spell) once per hour, simply by concentrating (range of 5' per spell-casting level). The knight cannot use that ability and attack on the same round.

—If the knight's Wisdom score is 13 or more, the character can cast spells (from the druidic spell list only) as if he were a druid of one-third his actual experience level (rounded down). If a fighter becomes a druidic knight right at 9th level, he'll immediately gain the druidic spells of a 3rd-level druid. With a lesser Wisdom score, the fighter can still be a druidic knight but will have no spell-casting ability.

—The druidic knight learns how to meditate and cast spells as druids would. He can do so at someone's behest, but at a price—set at the DM's discretion—that must involve a service to nature or to woodland beings.

—Druidic knights cannot turn undead.

—Druidic hirelings may include demi-

humans (especially halflings or elves) and woodland beings. A druidic knight cannot have more Hit-Dice worth of hirelings than his druidic spell-casting level. In other words, if a druidic knight can cast spells as a 3rd-level druid, he may not have more than 3 HD worth of hirelings accompany him.

—The druidic knight must assist any woodland being asking for help with two exceptions: He does not have to help creatures opposed to the druidic philosophy and goals; and if the knight is on a mission for a higher authority (such as on a quest, serving a duke, etc.), he may offer only a small amount of help. Assistance never involves the donation of money or items, only the offering of personal services for a short time.

—A druid of the Ninth Circle or higher may summon a knight to escort him to gatherings at the Hallowed Forest of Carnuilh. The knight must remain with the druid until the end of the celebration. This call supersedes that of a liege.

The bard

Bards are an essential part of the Robrenn culture. They are played using the thief character class as a starting point. The bard must choose music, singing, and storytelling skills, but he does not have the backstabbing and pickpocket abilities (druids frowned upon theft).

At 3rd level, the bard gains the **charm person** ability once per day, as per the magic-user spell. He affects a number of Hit Dice or levels equal to one-third his own level (rounded down). The attempt requires the bard to recite poems, sing, or play an instrument for three rounds. He must make a skill check on the weakest of his three mandatory skills. If he fails the skill check, his victims get a +3 to their saving throws. The bard fails completely if interrupted or wounded. Likewise, the bard may use this ability to negate another bard's **charm** attempt.

At 9th level, the bard may extend his charm ability to intelligent monsters (except undead, as per the fourth-level wizard spell, **charm monster**). At 15th level, his ability extends to plants as well (as the seventh-level wizard spell, **charm plants**). A successful saving throw vs. spells always negates the **charm**.

The bard may use his **charm** ability to affect Morale (either a +2 bonus to his companions, or a -2 to his opponents), or their eagerness to fight (+1 to hit for his companions, or -1 to hit for his opponents). These effects are automatic after three rounds (no save).

The bard can make a living from his trade. He can earn up to 5 cp per person every time he sings, plays his music, or tells stories in public (boost the reward to gold pieces if performing for a noble). He must make the appropriate skill check. If he fails, he gains nothing. If he succeeds, he makes 1 cp per person (+1 cp per point scored under his skill). For example,

a bard succeeding his skill check by a margin of two points would make 3 cp per person. If he uses his **charm** ability, assume he automatically succeeds, though if his skill check failed this bard will not be viewed very positively by his victims when the **charm** wears off.

(Special thanks to K. Boomgarden and N. Ewell for their very Celtic help.)

Letters

In GAZ14 *The Atruaghin Clans*, you have the Children of the Viper on the map, but not in the text. Instead, the Players' Guide mentions the Children of the Tiger. Are they the same? The Players' Guide mentions three rivers in the vicinity of the Children of the Horse, but the map shows only two. Which is correct?

Yes to question #1. The Children of the Viper should be called the Children of the Tiger (the map is wrong). The late Children of the Beaver, now dormant, took care of the pesky third river (i.e., the text was wrong; only two rivers are present).

How did the reactor of the F.S.S. *Beagle* (the source of the Radiance in Glantri) end up under the Great School of Magic? As far as I can tell, Blackmoor is way off to the northeast. Did the Immortals move it?

Yes to question #2. When the Immortals bestowed their magic upon it, they moved it and buried it deep under the region that would later become Glantri. After the planet changed its angle of rotation, the ancient land of Blackmoor became a frozen, uninhabitable wilderness. The Immortals sensed Glantri would become a more auspicious region and would serve their plans better.

Where did the magic in the F.S.S. *Beagle* come from, and where are the effects of the Radiance located in the Known World?

The F.S.S. Beagle was a starship. The Immortal's magic was added to its reactor after it crashed on Blackmoor. The effects of the artifact do not reach the Hollow World. Should you (as the DM) decide to affect the surface of the Hollow World, the area would be located exactly six hexes north of Fort Xichu in the Azcan Empire. The effects cover a 5-hex radius. Care to populate this desolate wilderness with Hollow World wizards?

Where is the basic module *Journey to the Rock* based?

Nowhere. It was a "suitable with any campaign" design. Journey to the Rock was not set in any particular area of the Known World. Should you need to place it, perhaps the best place would be in the vast unexplored region northwest of the Known World.

I love the **CREATURE CRUCIBLE™** series. I would like to see additional supplements for role-playing monstrous creatures.

Continued on page 73

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SAGE advice

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Join the sage this month as he tours the planet Athas, the world of the new DARK SUN™ campaign setting. The Rules Book and Wanderer's Journal are found within the DARK SUN boxed set. A second DARK SUN "Sage Advice" column will appear next month.

Are DARK SUN specialist mages restricted to being illusionists-only, or are the Rules Book sections on illusionists intended only as examples?

The text on page 26 of the Rules Book, under the "Defiler" heading, and similar text on page 28, under the "Preserver" heading, make it clear that Athasian mages are free to specialize in any school they wish. Illusionists receive their own sub-headings because that's the way they're treated in the *Player's Handbook* (which uses them as a general example for all specialist mages).

The Rules Book (page 59) says that the dragon of Tyr's defiler magic harms animal life. Does this also extend to monsters and characters? If so, how does this work, and how does the dragon "store" magical energy?

The dragon's defiler magic is baneful to all life. Exactly how this power might affect characters will be revealed in the *Dragon Kings* hardbound, to be released this spring. An appearance by the dragon is a major disaster on Athas, and no DM should be tempted to use the dragon lightly. Here are some unofficial suggestions until official rules arrive:

Use the Defiler Magical Destruction Table in the Rules Book, page 60. All plants and plantlike creatures in the area of effect perish, getting no saving throw. All other creatures having less than 4 +2 HD or an intelligence of 4 or less also perish.

For example, a mekillot has 11 HD but only animal intelligence (1), so it automatically dies. Creatures with at least 4 +2 HD and an intelligence of 5 or better save vs. breath weapon or perish as well. Even if the save succeeds, the affected creatures still suffers an initiative penalty (Rules Book, page 61, "Effects on Living Creatures"). If there are no plants in the area and all the animals save, the dragon gains no spell energy but can use stored energy instead.

Details on how the dragon of Tyr stores energy will be revealed in the *Dragon Kings* hardbound.

To which spheres do clerics and druids receive access?

Clerics receive major access to their elemental sphere of worship and minor access to the Sphere of the Cosmos (as stated on pages 29 and 59 of the Rules Book). Many additional priest spells will be presented in the *Dragon Kings* hardbound, along with rules for incorporating all *Tome of Magic* spells into the DARK SUN spheres. For now, I suggest you allow a priest major access to his elemental sphere, plus major access to the Sphere of the Cosmos; if you don't, no priest will ever get to cast a curative spell better than *cure light wounds* (as one reader pointed out), and priests of earth will get no fourth-level spells at all (as another reader pointed out). However, if incorporating all the spells from *Dragon Kings* and *Tome of Magic*, only allow clerics to have minor access to the Sphere of the Cosmos.

Page 59 of the Rules Book is in error regarding druids. Druids receive major access to the Sphere of the Cosmos. A druid should receive major access to one elemental sphere, plus major access to the Sphere of the Cosmos, and perhaps minor access to a second elemental sphere also associated with his guarded lands; this gives druids a level of power that matches their reputation in the Wanderer's Journal.

Templars have, according the rules, major access to all spheres. Templars are the only priestly spell-casters who have a connection to anything than even remotely resembles a deity, and their spell selection should be accordingly great.

Do templars gain bonus spells for high wisdom scores, or is this at the whim of the sorcerer-king? What kinds of weapons can templars use?

Templars gain bonus spells for high

wisdom scores, just as any priestly spell-caster does. The sorcerer-king, however, always has the option to deny some or all spells to a templar who has offended him.

Templars as a character class have no weapon restrictions (Rules Book, pages 33-34). However, a sorcerer-king might decree restrictions of his own, and these might change from time to time.

Does a sorcerer-king know his templars' thoughts when granting them spells? In other words, can a templar be an undiscovered traitor and still receive spells?

The exact extent of the sorcerer-kings' power over their templars is unrevealed, but I don't find anything in the rules that implies that they know what's on all their templars' minds all the time, or that the act of granting spells allows the sorcerer-king to know all a templar's thoughts. Since all sorcerer-kings are accomplished psionics, however, they would carefully examine the thoughts of at least their higher-level templars; this makes it unlikely that "moles" exist in any city's templar hierarchy. Likewise, a city-state's totalitarian government, the general populace's hatred and distrust of the templars, the sorcerer-king's shrewdness, and the obvious rewards available to any templar who embarrasses a superior or crushes a misbehaving subordinate make it pretty unlikely that any disloyal templar will survive for long. Finally, consider that all templars are either neutral or evil, and that the quickest way a templar can become wealthy and powerful is to remain loyal but corrupt. I don't think there would be undiscovered traitors in the templar ranks even if there could be.

What is the maximum range over which a sorcerer-king can grant spells?

A sorcerer-king can grant spells over an effectively unlimited range on the world of Athas.

Are characters with wild psionic talents allowed to have attack and defense modes?

Yes, but very rarely. First, understand that each attack and defense mode is a psionic power all by itself, and it functions in the game just like any other psionic power. Characters with wild talents roll once each on Table 12 in *The Complete Psionics Handbook* (pages 20-21) to deter-

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mine their powers. Since all the attack and defense modes are telepathic sciences or devotions that are not listed on Table 12, the character can get them only if he rolls a 90 and gets to pick any two devotions, or rolls 91-00 and gets to roll on Table 13 (if he's very lucky and rolls a 00, he can pick a devotion and roll on Table 13). Since attack and defense modes also are not included on Table 13, the character can get them only if he continues to be lucky and rolls one of the "choose any" results on Table 13. Barring such good die rolls or some type of DM intervention, characters with wild talents don't get attack and defense modes.

Can a *sleep* or *hold person* spell affect a thri-kreen? A half-giant? A mul? Since half-giants get to double their hit dice, are their hit dice doubled with respect to spell effects governed by hit dice, such as *sleep*, *cloudkill*, etc.?

A *sleep* spell can affect any creature that falls within the spell's hit-die limits, unless the creature's description specifically makes it immune. Athasian thri-kreen don't sleep, but they are not immune to any sort of magically or psionically induced sleep. As the Rules Book clearly states, all character races except thri-kreen are subject to the *hold person* spell (see spell description, page 95). Half-giants

receive double hit points from their hit dice, not double hit dice; a third-level half-giant, for example, easily could have 60 hp or more but still is subject to *sleep* spells.

Are Athasian halflings really limited to a 16 strength? Since characters must meet their ability requirements before applying racial adjustments, this appears to be the case.

You have read the rules correctly. A character must refer to the Racial Ability Requirements table (actually Table 1; Rules Book, page 3) before applying the modifiers from Table 2 (also on page 3). Athasian halflings, however, probably should be at least as strong as halflings on other worlds, and maybe stronger. It's not unreasonable to give Athasian halflings a final strength limit of 18; however, Athasian halflings with 18 strength still do not roll for extraordinary strength, as their small bodies just don't carry enough muscle.

Since many nonwarrior characters on Athas can have strength scores of 19 or higher, how do you treat the extraordinary strength roll for an 18 strength on Athas?

Strictly speaking, you treat extraordinary strength exactly the way you do on any other world. That is, warriors with strengths of 18 roll on the extraordinary-

strength portion of Table 1 in the *PHB* (page 14), and other characters don't. While a nonwarrior on Athas might be blessed with a great strength score, he doesn't have the training or discipline that allows a warrior to develop a strength score of 18 into something outstanding.

I know of one non-Athasian campaign that dispenses with extraordinary strength altogether. Under this house rule, a warrior with a 13 strength gets the benefits of an 18 strength, a warrior with a 14 strength gets the benefits of an 18/01 strength, and so on up to strength 18. The DM I met who used this rule claimed it made having that elusive 18 strength score less vital to the warrior. Nonwarriors, who have less physical training, used the regular strength table. Even if you adopt this rule, however, you'll still have a situation where a nonwarrior with a 19 or better strength score has vastly better combat modifiers than characters—even warriors—who have strength scores of 18 or less.

Can thri-kreen use sign language, or do their nonhuman hands make this impossible? Why can't thri-kreen be thieves or templars? If they can, what are their level limits and thief skill adjustments?

A thri-kreen's hands and arms can certainly perform sign language of some kind. Since the Athasian sign language is the closest thing to a planet-wide tongue that Athas has, it's probably safe to assume that sign language takes into account and adjusts for differences between human and thri-kreen hands. (Even with all the differences described in the rules, there would literally be millions of gestures that both thri-kreen and human hands could perform.) The DM, however, might decide that the thri-kreen have their own version of sign language or that the physical differences in hands cause an ability-check penalty when humans or demi-humans use sign language to communicate with thri-kreen.

I'll spare my regular readers the standard sermon about racial-class and level restrictions and why they are necessary for game balance, and I'll plunge directly into a discussion about why thri-kreen don't become thieves or templars:


Thri-kreen are born hunters and warriors. Those thri-kreen who have a talent or liking for stealth and concealment become rangers, not thieves. Skulking about and playing with locks, traps, poisons, and other nefarious devices just doesn't suit this race. Thri-kreen also are hive creatures who are very dedicated and loyal to their group, even if there are non-thri-kreen in it and even if the individual thri-kreen in question is evil. The deceit, corruption, disdain for underlings, and disrespect for superiors displayed by the templars is completely alien to the thri-kreen.

Ω

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We always appreciate your cards, letters, and faxes, but we must draw the line when folks start faxing clues from a published hint booklet! The only clues we will publish are those that you, our readers and fellow gamers, have uncovered yourselves when playing a game. If you can't write about your own game investigations, please don't tie up our fax machine with others' work.

KnightLine

We received a fax in September from an unhappy player who stated that a hint for *Ultima VI*, published in *DRAGON*® issue #173, page 60 (regarding "spam" and "humbug"), damaged his game disk. The faxer warned that the hint is not a secret cheat menu. "If you call Origin Systems

[about damage to your disk by using that hint], you will have to pay to replace your disks. [Origin] says if you use this hint at the start of your game, you will have trouble with your disks."

We must repeat to all readers that you should not try any of the hints, tricks, or

other game aids listed in our column when using your original game disk. This is not an idle warning! It is extremely important that everyone understand that this column's game hints are submitted by a wide variety of readers. We warn everyone that any hints should be used when gaming with a backup of the original disk (such as copying the game files to your hard drive or onto floppy disks). A basic rule for all to follow is that you should never play any adventure using your original game disk!

If you need hints, U.S. Gold has a bulletin board for gamers with modems, upon which you can access all kinds of tips and news for this company's wide range of offerings. The bulletin board number is: (408) 296-8800.

Computer games' ratings

X	Not recommended
*	Poor
**	Fair
***	Good
****	Excellent
*****	Superb

H.E.L.P.

Matthew McHale of Dayton, Ohio, and "Septinius" of Austin, Tex., have come to the aid of Jon Timmons, who requested "riddle" assistance with *The Bard's Tale II* in DRAGON® issue #173. Both offered the same advice for the riddle in Dargoth's Tower. Matthew writes:

"The strange mage wants two words: FREEZE PLEASE. In the Grey Crypt, at (1E,7N), is a sphinx. It requires you to name a creature of the crypt. You may tell it "Death Sword" to make the exit reappear, or you may tell it "Wise One" to make stairs appear that lead to the second level. The stairs appear in the northern area of the crypt at (0E,18N). For those in Dargoth's Tower, 'reverse tiny and late' are both the 7th and 8th answers. The answers are LARGE and EARLY. Finally, the code for the Dreamspell is ZZFO."

"Septinius" has a different view:

"For the Grey Crypt, have you found the teleport in the area of darkness? When you enter the area of darkness, turn left, take 17 steps (3E,4N), turn right, then take one step. You will hit a teleport that takes you to (3E,13N). Go to the north wall and find the door. Enjoy."

Brian Emparges of Minneapolis, Minn., answers the call for help with *Ultima VI* that appeared in this column in DRAGON® issue #173: "To find Exodus in the Shrine of Diligence, look for a secret passage in one of the pillars. Go down the ladder inside and beware of daemons when talking to the statue. Exodus is one demon I wouldn't want to meet in a dark alley!"

Joshua Hornbacher of Sebewaing, Mich., answers a reader's query concerning *Ultima IV* (from issue #171): "Here is the answer: INFINITY. You get the answer when you become an Avatar in the eight virtues. The visions you receive are decoded with the player reference card. One problem, though: Some of the letters are 'J.' However, in Latin, there is no 'J'; the letter 'I' replaces the letter 'J.' Put the letter 'I' in place of all [vision] letters that resemble 'I,' and that should spell INFINITY."

Reviews

Might and Magic III: Isles of Terra

New World Computing (818-999-0626)
PC/MS-DOS version \$59.95

New World Computing has released an enjoyable fantasy role-playing adventure. This sequel to the smash hit *Might and Magic II* is a vast improvement, thanks to a much-improved graphic interface, truly random encounters, automapping, and a character system that requires party cooperation for success. *Might and Magic III (M&M3)* is bound to be a leading contender for the best adventure game of 1991.

This game is a huge enterprise. Just locating a starting point for this review is quite a task, as there is so much that is good here. Upon booting, those with Ro-



Might and Magic III (New World Computing)

land sound equipment will delight in not only the opening theme music, but the sound track that accompanies your party's various stops in this excitement-rich world (e.g., if you enter a dungeon, cautious "stalking" music follows your party's investigations). If you ever get tired of the music (we didn't), you simply access the game's control panel by pressing the TAB key, and you can turn it off with a click of your mouse or joy-stick button. You can also enter the letter of the element you wish to change.

The user interface is quite enjoyable. We preferred the mouse method of play, but joy-stick and keyboard interaction are fully supported for those who don't have other I/O devices for the computers. Commands are handled through various windows that appear when something requires your attention. For example, when you encounter a fountain, a window with dialogue box appears, asking if you wish to drink or throw a coin into the gurgling fluid. You can directly answer with "Y" or "N," or you can move your mouse cursor to an up or down thumb

icon. Click on the up thumb, and the action is completed. Click on the down thumb, and your action is canceled.

The main display window for this game occupies two-thirds of your screen. Within this window is a first-person view of the action. Around the border of the window screen are various elements that represent the ability to use skills acquired in the game. A bat at the top center of the window opens and closes its jaws should one of your party possess the ability to sense oncoming danger. If your questers are about to be attacked, the mouth indicates danger is near.

When starting the game, you may use the prerolled characters that come with the game disk or create your own. We had such miserable luck with our first created party that we decided to use the prerolled set until we became more familiar with the geography of the isles and their dangers. That was a good idea! The prerolled set has more than basic skills and equipment and allows you to wander inside the first town (Fountainhead) while testing your outdoor skills as well. A map of

Might and Magic® III



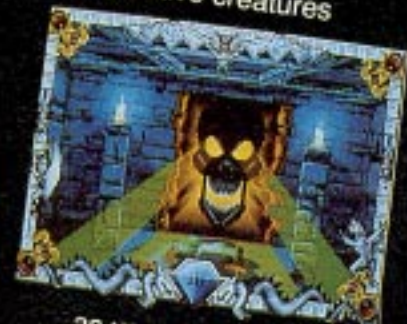
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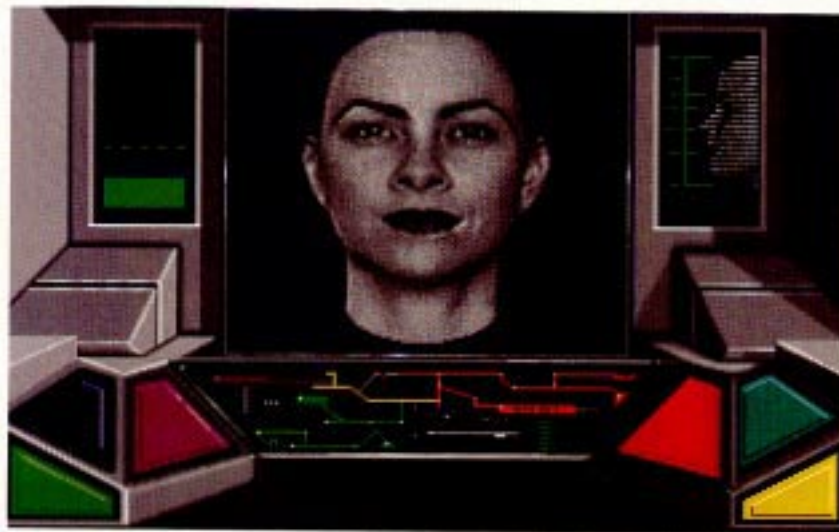
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**NEW
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COMPUTING™**



Might and Magic III (New World Computing)

Fountainhead appears in the game manual to guide those first steps.

The Isles of Terra are a rather dangerous place to reside. Riches exist, but nothing of value comes easily, and you never seem to have enough money. You can hire two adventurers to join your initial set of six, but—as you will wish them to be of continual assistance to your group—you will probably train them to raise their experience levels. This means paying their daily rate increase as well. If you haven't the funds to pay your hirelings, you might find yourself stranded without that fantastic hiring spell-caster facing a horrible situation.

Money is also required to buy food, better weapons for your fighters, and additional spells for our spell-casters. The latter must acquire membership in town guilds before they are allowed to purchase magicks.

Your adventurers must also acquire various skills such as cartography (to access the game's automapping feature) to succeed. One important skill, mountaineering, costs a whopping 5,000 gold pieces to acquire, so remember to save your money (and your game). Gems are important to your spell-casters, so don't surrender them. As *M&M3* allows you to save your game at any time, we saved our game before spending money or gems on potentially false promises.

The background for your quest is well documented in the game manual. The evil Sheltem has twice attempted to destroy the Isles. Corak the Mysterious searches for Sheltem and has enlisted your aid. Corak has gone on before you, the manual being a record of his writings to assist you in the search for Sheltem. You must uncover the evil one's scheme and try to stop him from succeeding. It's no easy task!

A full-color map and a reference card also accompany the game. With animated encounters and super sound, *M&M3* has held us captive for three weeks. The game's automapping feature is a real boon,

but you'll find yourself constantly taking notes on rumors from taverns and messages on dungeon walls. You'll obtain hints when you least expect them. You'll also want to note the sectors where you might find mysterious statues, important points of interest, and other goodies that you will need to complete the game but will have to investigate later.

We did have problems Equipping some items. For example, we needed to Use an item and delved into the Item window. When clicking on the icon we wanted to Use, we received a dialogue window that stated the item had to be Equipped. first. When we then clicked on the Equip item, we received a second dialogue item stating the particular item couldn't be equipped. This made it impossible to use many items of possible value. We had to figure out other ways around the need for that item. Perhaps an alien bug infested our computer, but this is definitely an inconvenience if it was a programming error.

M&M3 is a superb adventure. Color, animation, sound, and intriguing quests and characters all blend to provide gamers with a topnotch offering. Should anything untoward happen to your characters, their portraits reveal something is amiss. If a character drinks too much, his portrait reflects his inebriated state. Should a character become poisoned, obvious signs show in his portrait.

Obviously, New World Computing has advanced its skills to match the increased level of capabilities within PC/MS-DOS gaming, but this requires some computing power for your system. You now need more than four megabytes of free space on your hard disk to handle the game files. Although VGA/MCGA video boards and monitors are getting cheaper, they still cost about \$250 or so for a combination board/monitor set that is built well. With AdLib and SoundBlaster sound support, you don't necessarily need the Roland sound capabilities to enjoy the musical score, but the music available with the

Roland is effective and well written.

Heartiest congratulations to New World Computing! *M&M3* is a winner.

Gateway to the Savage Frontier * * * *

SSI (408-737-6800)

PC/MS-DOS version \$49.95

Gateway to the Savage Frontier (GSF) is SSI's latest Gold Box offering. Based in an entirely new location within TSR's AD&D® FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting, this game is an exciting adventure that finds your party trying to halt an invasion of evil marauders.

GSF offers wilderness adventures and detailed outdoor battle scenes. You can add allies to your adventuring party and must also use mystical power to halt the beasties. What *GSF* doesn't offer is any technological advance in gameplay. Unlike SSI's *Eye of the Beholder*, *GSF* plays like all of SSI's other Gold Box games. It seems redundant to discuss the same features that we've discussed in our other SSI Gold Box reviews. *GSF* requires mapmaking skills to ensure that you find your way around inhabited areas and copious notes to follow up on the messages you read in your Adventurer's Journal.

However, don't think that just because the back cover of the game box states that you have a "rare chance to begin a spectacular new quest" that you're getting something different from other SSI adventures. You're not. What you are getting is the tried-and-true SSI engine, but without the innovation programmed into *Eye of the Beholder*.

As technology advances, SSI should consider releasing new products in the same vein as *Eye of the Beholder*. To have VGA/MCGA graphics support really means little when the graphic elements of the game are reminiscent of earlier releases. Granted, the AdLib sound drivers now enable you to hear the whoosh of your sword as you strike at your attacker, and the subsequent scream of the beastie as it is slain, but otherwise there is little new in the way of sound enhancement.

GSF breaks no new ground, but it is a challenging game. *GSF* opens a new TSR adventuring frontier for adventures but leaves us a little disappointed due to its lack of innovation. We were hoping for a little more in a game that opened new territories to the computer gamer.

By the way, as was so aptly noted by Gregg Sharp of Buckeye, Ariz., we agree that SSI should come up with a "PRINT CHARACTER" option for its games!

Martian Memorandum ***

Access Software (phone n/a)

PC/MS-DOS version Price n/a

This graphic adventure debuts on your screen with some very cool jazz music. Those with Roland sound boards will really enjoy the soundtrack throughout the game. *Martian Memorandum* also sports some extremely well-devised digitized video sequences, as well as speech. It



Martian Memorandum (Access Software)

requires at least 10 MHz CPU speed and 640K of RAM.

The adventure's premise is somewhat trite (the kidnapping of an heiress), but the settings are certainly exotic, ranging from Earth to Mars. You become Tex Murphy, PI. The year is 2039. Your personality is that of the hard-boiled detectives featured in hundreds of movies in the 1940s.

Marshall Alexander, the president of Terraform Corporation, hires you to locate his daughter, whom he claims was kidnapped. Others that you contact disagree, feeling she has run away. By following the clues, you eventually solve this mystery. The interface is good, although not on par with Sierra's or LucasFilm's methods.

When you enter a screen, a full-color display is presented of either the area where Tex is located or of an external location. Yellow text offers a lengthy introductory paragraph to each new circumstance. Sometimes the text is a little hard to read.

Once you click your mouse or joy-stick button, the screen dissolves and usually returns with a view of the location you have requested. Across the bottom of the screen are icons; clicking on an icon activates a course of action.

When you encounter someone you wish to talk to, his picture appears on-screen and his digitized speech might present you with a statement or a query. You must select from as many as three preset responses. When you've read your allowed responses in an on-screen window, you click on the response number that coincides with the answer you wish to use. You can also offer the other party something from your inventory or can ask about a subject. To end the conversation before its normal conclusion (such as when you are backtracking to see if you've missed some information, and you don't need to relive the entire conversation),

select the END icon.

Artful and humorous conversations will intrigue you as you go about trying to locate the victim, but you have to watch what you say. The conversation you'll have with one secretary in particular can end up with you having something tossed in your face, or perhaps you'll be so boring she'll fall asleep.

One rule all games normally follow is that of a consistent interface. The problem with *Martian Memorandum* rests in the fact that this adventure's interface is inconsistent. In this game, for example, when you click on the GOTO icon while in a room, then move your cursor over an object in the room, you usually won't be able to move toward that object; you have to click on GET and place your cursor over the object in order to retrieve the item. Your on-screen persona doesn't move an inch! It's as though the object was magically teleported from its location to Tex's inventory. A window pops up and tells you Tex now possesses the item.

But, in some of the major scenes in the game, you'll find your character is quite able to walk to various locations. If your character can't retrieve a useable item,



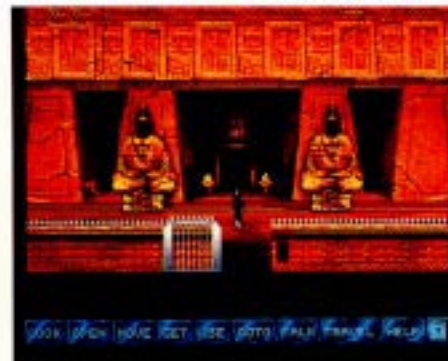
Martian Memorandum (Access Software)

why bother programming in a GOTO command? You don't use GOTO to move to a new location; that's handled by the TRAVEL command.

The second inconsistency rests with the uses of the animated portrait of any NPC talking with you. First of all, a portrait of the individual appears (Access picked some really good faces for these portraits!). Then, digitized speech is heard for that character—but not in all circumstances. Normally, when you respond to an NPC's question or statement, you hear speech. When you offer another response, only a text window appears with the conversation—no speech. You never know what you're going to receive. (You ought to see the face of one Rhonda Foxworth when you offer her a rose you have purchased especially for her. She looks absolutely nauseated, despite the fact that roses are rare in this post-nuclear society). However, when the digitized speech and animated portrait do combine successfully, they are a marvelous addition to your enjoyment of this adventure.

The third problem is that when you select a location, you normally find a graphic display of that location on your screen. However, just when you expect to see the next area you are investigating, you get a general-purpose city or alley view with a textual description of your desired location. It seems as if Access wanted to get this adventure to market by a specific date and simply didn't have enough time to code in all of the niceties that should be in the adventure. That's really too bad, because the way *Martian Memorandum* plays now, it's not on a par with graphic adventures recently released by other companies.

A fourth problem is that we have just completed our review of Dynamix's *Heart of China* (see issue #176). When you've played one of the best graphic adventures available on the market, the shortfall of other graphic adventures seems magnified. Even though our *Heart of China* review may have tainted our view of subsequent material that's not up to par, it's part of a company's charter to compete with the latest technology and programming skills to make its product a viable competitor.



Martian Memorandum offers an unusual twist on an otherwise mundane kidnapping case, sports some extremely well-crafted graphics and animations, and offers digitized sound that, unfortunately, sounds really lousy on an AdLib board (for the best speech results, try the Sound-Blaster). The user interface is easy to learn.

We feel this adventure suffers from design inconsistencies that detract from the game's overall enjoyment. *Martian Memorandum* does, however, make an interesting acquisition for those die-hard graphic adventure gamers out there. With a little more consistency, it would certainly be rated as a must-buy.

Wing Commander II

Origin (512-328-0926)

PC/MS-DOS version

\$79.95

You're the famed hero of the original *Wing Commander* game, a pilot from the carrier *Tiger's Claw*. You defeated the Kilrathi Empire in the Vega Sector. In the first add-on disk for *Wing Commander*, entitled *Secret Missions*, you and your fellow pilots from the *Tiger's Claw* found and destroyed a Kilrathi secret weapon. During *Secret Missions 2: Crusade*, you flew a Kilrathi ship undercover to locate the Kilrathi's plans for a holy war, and you saved the Firekkan race.

But your flying days were suddenly numbered.

While the *Tiger's Claw* attacked the K'tithrak Mang, you noted that several enemy fighters faded from sight and from your ship's radar. With the *Tiger's Claw* having other concerns, you decided not to alarm your carrier with what you believed was a radar malfunction. Upon your return, however, the *Tiger's Claw* was destroyed by the enemy fighters that had disappeared from your radar!

Landing on another carrier, you learn you are the only pilot who witnessed the "stealth fighters." Your flight recorder disk mysteriously disappears from your fighter after you landed. Facing a general court martial, your claims of the deadly fighters went ignored, but the counts of treason against you are reduced to negligence, due to lack of evidence. Certain flag officers continue to blame you for the destruction of the *Tiger's Claw*. Your career appears to be over.

Wing Commander II (WC2) takes over at this juncture. Many game enhancements make this adventure worth your attention. The awesome ship-to-ship combat animations continue to inspire your senses, as do the heart-pounding music soundtracks. WC2 adds more missions and longer cinematic scenes, and you feel as though you are participating in a science-fiction movie.

Characters can be newly created or transferred from *Wing Commander* (WC). In WC, you were briefed on your missions while aboard the *Tiger's Claw*. You would return to that carrier once your missions had been completed.



In WC2, in addition to having twice the number of missions as in WC, you can land on carriers, space stations, and even planets. While you are flying on missions, cinematic scenes may reveal a new objective that you must accomplish, one that wasn't revealed in your battle briefing.

In the barracks, you can exit to DOS, save your game, go to the next mission, or exit to a cinematic scene through the barracks door. The cinematic scenes in WC2 are longer and far more involved than those in WC. Whether you see them or not depends on how well you accomplish your missions, whether your wingmen are still alive or not, and other game factors. These scenes reveal other characters in the game and many times reveal various subplots. For instance, we viewed scenes that reveal a traitor aboard the carrier we were on. We have also witnessed friction between our character and other fighter pilots who blame our guy for destruction of the *Tiger's Claw*.

One game enhancement is the introduction of new Confederation and Kilrathi ships, weaponry, and features. The biggest change we saw was the Confederation's Broadsword and Sabre, two new bombers. Bombers carry torpedoes that are capable of destroying an enemy capital ship with a single shot. The tactical problem is that the torpedo must be aimed at the target



Wing Commander II (Origin)

for a longer period of time, so it can bypass the target's phase shields. This tends to make your bombers rather juicy targets for the enemy fighters, so bombers have left, right, and rear turrets for defense. By selecting a different view using the key-

EIDOLON CITY IN THE SKY

Eidolon! The name is legendary from the shores of the Bladelands to the plains of the nomadic Jan. A glittering jewel, a treasury floating on a cloud, a testament to the power of coin, Eidolon is the unassailable heart of the richest trade empire on the Shadow World. It is dominated by guildhalls and shops trading in the most exotic luxury goods. About the towers and rippling banners circle a swarm of sky-ships, the merchant fleet of the Prince.

By any measure of mortal lifetimes, it is an ancient city: for fourteen centuries it has hovered serenely above the rolling hills of Sel-kai. But Eidolon is young compared to her land-bound sister, Sel-kai City. Many times the size of Eidolon, the 'Lower City' is where the bulk of commerce takes place.

Sel-kai City has existed for four and a half millennia, growing to a sprawling metropolis of islands topped by stone towers straddling the delta. Bridges span the dozens of canals at many levels, linking the twelve districts of Sel-kai City. By day the streets and canals are full of traders, craftsmen and Merchant-barons. By night shadows conceal the city's more sinister inhabitants: sadistic priests in search of 'volunteers,' spies of the Dragonlords... and worse. Word has spread among the Loremasters that the force no man can comprehend—the Unlife—has sent its servants abroad again.

Eidolon, City in the Sky is a new sourcebook for *Shadow World* detailing the most prosperous trade center on the planet. The book includes:

- A huge (22" x 34"), full-color hand-rendered map of Sel-kai City.
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board, you can switch to one of the turrets and keep the Kilrathi at a distance.

Other new features include the chaff pod and the tractor beam. Chaff is used to divert enemy missiles away from your ship. The drawbacks are that these pods must be used only at the instant before missile impact. This only works with missiles currently targeting your ship and only diverts such missiles. The tractor beam allows you to lock onto a small target (like an ejected pilot) and pull it into your ship.

Another feature Origin finally installed in WC2 is replay. Though not perfect, it allows you to view combat or maneuvers that you have just completed, giving you a chance to watch the combat from various viewpoints and see what happened. The drawback to this feature is that the replay cannot be saved. It can be viewed only once within a minute or so after the combat; then it is lost.

The biggest feature is reserved for those who have SoundBlaster sound boards installed in their computers. Digitized speech can then be utilized, adding new depth to the game. A speech pack is available from Origin, so you don't have to read on-screen messages; instead, you listen and view certain cinematic sequences. You can also hear your wingman talk to you on a mission.

If you don't mind giving up 12-15 megabytes of hard disk drive storage (or 16-22 megabytes when installing the speech pack), you are in for an extremely addicting and well-designed game. WC2 will not disappoint you. You *must* have at least a 286 PC system, VGA, 640K of RAM, and 12 MHz CPU speed. However, to fully enjoy the game, you will need at least 16 MHz and 1-2 megabytes of RAM. The system requirements are this game's only drawback, causing us to reduce an otherwise perfect six-star rating to a five-star evaluation. Too few in the gaming community will have the necessary hardware to run this game. For those who have the required fast and powerful computers, WC2 is well worth your investment.

Space Quest I

Sierra On-Line (209-683-4468)

PC/MS-DOS version

\$59.95

Sierra has redesigned this classic science-fiction adventure to take advantage of new PC/MS-DOS technology, including the upgrade of the graphics to 256 colors (VGA). The parser has been improved and is now the expected point-and-click interface Sierra has used for *Space Quest IV* and *King's Quest V*. The music is also much improved, and digitized speech has been added to some sections.

If you haven't played *Space Quest I* before, now is definitely the best time to pick up this updated version. The game plays far better than before and is highly enjoyable, richly deserving its fame.

Spider-Man

Sega of America (415-508-2800)

Sega Genesis version

Price n/a

Spider-Man, the super hero of comics and cartoons, has made his debut as a video-game star for the Sega Genesis. His is an excellent action game with well-balanced animation and sound.

In this adventure, Spider-Man must find and disarm a bomb, hidden by the master criminal Kingpin, in New York City within 24 hours. Our hero must face a city whose populace has turned against him, and some of Spidey's most ruthless enemies also oppose him: Doctor Octopus, the Lizard, the Hobgoblin, the Sandman, Electro, and Venom.

This certainly sounds like an impossible task! However, if anyone can accomplish this seemingly Herculean task, it's Spidey. Using his powerful fists and feet, Spider-Man can climb walls and onto ceilings. He has a web-shooter, a device that can entangle his enemies, shield the web-slinger, or allow him to safely swing out of danger. Spider-Man doesn't have an inexhaustible amount of webbing, though; he can occasionally find some during his travels, or he can earn money to purchase more.

Spider-Man, also known as Peter Parker, is a photographer for the *Daily Bugle*. Peter, as Spider-Man, can earn \$50 to \$150 per photo taken of the action he faces. He can take three photos per scene.

Spidey isn't invincible. If he takes enough damage he is captured by the police. The game can be continued, but in doing so valuable time is lost. Spider-Man can also go back to his apartment to rest, but this also takes a considerable amount of time. Remember, he has only 24 hours to find the bomb!

Spider-Man is quite a good game. The animation, especially that of Spidey, is excellent. The intermissions between rounds are well detailed.

One problem we faced with the game was in getting used to the game-controller buttons. Once mastering the buttons, the controls are actually quite useful. We liked the many options available: the web shield, photographs, and the ability to leave a scene to rest. This is a great game for any Spidey fanatic.

Clue corner

BUCK ROGERS? Countdown to Doomsday (SSI)

1. If you ready heavy weapons (such as rocket launchers, plasma launchers, and grenade launchers) before a fight, they'll be ready to fire on the first round. This means you won't have to waste a character's first combat turn loading a heavy weapon. This is especially helpful when going up against robots.

2. A good idea is to ready each heavy weapon as soon as you finish a fight. If you do this, you won't be surprised and watch helplessly as each character readies

a heavy weapon while robots turn your party into chutney.

3. If you board a Mercurian Medium Cruiser and capture it, you'll find enough plasma launchers to outfit nearly your entire party.

Neil Johnson
Brooksville FL

Death Knights of Krynn (SSI)

1. To defeat the evil forces in Turf, you must battle the forces in the center of town—twice in a row. Go to the right, enter the center door, and defeat three blue dragons. Then Skomp departs, and you find the boar's carcass. Give it to the dwarf making stew, and he'll give you a Short Sword +2.

2. When Dalcimer defeats the Liche Guards twice, fight him. The next time you fight him, he won't have any guards. If you can disrupt the zombie giants' card game, you can get a Long Sword +4 and other goodies.

3. When you get the Dream Stone, go to Kalaman and find the Dream Pavilion. Go to Vingaard and see the Dream Merchant about the dream. Be sure to defeat the creatures in his head, or you won't be able to rest or memorize spells.

4. Segbas sends you on a mission to prove your worthiness. The first mission is to the High Clerist's Tower, and the second is to the Dragon Pit.

5. When you are near Cekos, watch out for the kuo-toa. You have no choice but to free the slaves on the ship, if you encounter them.

Jason R. Moore
Charlotte NC

Hero's Quest (Sierra)

1. For unlimited money, go north from the first plaza at the start of the game, enter the magic shop, and type "Sell Beard" to receive 10 dinars. You can repeat this as many times as you wish.

2. To really unload yourself, use the hint above and go to the weapons shop. Purchase 99 daggers; then repeat twice more. If you now look at your statistics, you'll see that your encumbrance is below zero. If you purchase more than 400 daggers, each set of 99 additional daggers earns you extra dinars.

3. The tree in the mountains east of Two gives you Fruit of Compassion if you accomplish the following: hug it, say its name, tell it about yourself, and give it some dirt.

4. Buy the X-ray glasses and wear them to Rasier when you meet the princess. You'll receive a nice surprise.

5. Don't buy more than one packet of incense, or you will not be able to capture the fire elemental.

6. In the warriors' guild, kill him.

7. If your character stops in the middle of an alley, there is something there.

8. You must search carefully to find the secret mages' guild.

9. Try using the oil to move the anvil.

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"...I'm having a blast-and-a-half playing *Monster Island*. I've only played one other PBM game before, but this is just the kind of PBM game I would wish for...The Knowledge Blurbs and battle scenes are excellent..."

– John Perry

"I also wish to express my complete and enthusiastic satisfaction with your service. ***Monster Island* is a complete joy!** The game itself is great fun, but it's the professional way you handle it that impresses me most. When there was a problem with the results, you were right there to handle it, and sent along a revision quickly; when I've made an invalid entry, it's nice to get a personal note explaining where I went wrong." – Mark Berman

"First let me thank you for a wonderful game! Simply...beastly. You did a super job in writing and running the game; even if it is 100% computer moderated..." – Brian Leach

"I have enjoyed playing *Monster Island*; it is truly a fine piece of game design and programming. I am a game designer/programmer myself..." – Brian Booker

"*Monster Island* is a great game, much better than *It's a Crime!* There are more things to do each turn with a wider range of results. Far and away this is the **best role-playing PBM** I have ever played." – Alan Santa

"Overall, *Monster Island* is an original, humorous and exciting PBM game. Its strong points include clearly written rules, simple order format, detailed descriptions of creatures and actions, and a sense of humor...you never feel like the entire game is just a collection of numbers or a giant equation."

– Gail Chotoff, *American Gamer*

"Keep up the great work! I'm on turn 42 and they keep getting better and better. I showed my last few turns to the guy I started with back in '89 – he really wishes he'd kept in the game. Can't wait for newsletter #3."

– Steve Lindemann

"This is an iceberg of a game. It shows...only a tenth of its detail above the water: As you play you get not just new equipment but new orders and whole new game modules rolling open before your eyes...the early turns really are very good fun and worth the money."

– Dr. Nicholas Palmer, *Flagship*

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10. Some advertisements may not be fake—such as the sign over the weapon makers.

Brian Bucklew
Plantation FL

Might and Magic III (New World Comp.)

1. In Fountainhead, find Cypher. For 25 gold, you'll learn a lot.

2. Check out the Cyclop's Cavern for an all-important key.

3. If you can afford 500 gems, give them to the statue at B1 (X1,Y1) for 5,000 gold pieces and some great items.

4. Destroy the sprite's hut at B2 (X6,Y10) and earn 1,000 experience points!

5. To release Morphose, the servant of Gaia and the protector of Fountainhead, you must slay the Rat Overlord. If you succeed, you'll learn a great fact about one of the fountains, as well as earning 2,500 gold pieces and various weaponry.

6. To enter the Fortress of Fear, you'll need the yellow key.

7. If you can return the Golden Alicorn to the Unicorn Shrine, he will be released. Look in the swamplands.

8. Try instant travel between towns by uttering the destination phrases required.

9. If you dig at A1 (X13,Y8), you might locate something rather magical.

10. Remember "RATS" if you wish to thoroughly search all of the caverns.

The Lessers

Pools of Darkness (SSI)

1. Use the option to search in the Knight's Tomb. After defeating the elements, light the four braziers in the corners of the second floor tower and ring the tower bells.

2. Tanetal is found by going up the dark tower near Myth Drannor, killing Marcus (go back several times to the Spectral Servant if you've destroyed all of the destinations it gives you for Marcus), then go to the vessel of Moander.

3. Kalistes is found by going through the temple at the bottom of the drow caverns under Zhentil Keep. Prepare for a pair of tough fights. It seems as though a game glitch in version 1.0 has you enter a com-

bat with a servant of Tanetal and his elements immediately after your fight with Kalistes and the drow.

4. Thorne is accessible through the Dragon Aerie, next to the Crater of Verdigris.

5. Don't accept the ring from the fire giant mage.

6. There is a sage in Moander's ear who can provide you with magic weapons and training. Aeghwat is in the wound on Moander's arm. Tanetal is in Moander's heart. Talk to the Guardian for a way to deal with the sticky slime.

7. Arcam is a wimp.

Gregg Sharp
Buckeye AZ

Secret of the Silver Blades (SSI)

1. The reason Vala goes crazy is that she dislikes charming spells.

2. The door with three keyholes and lightning running through it in the castle is an illusion. Bash the door down.

3. When battling Sargatha the medusa and her guards after you pass through the first great door, keep in mind that Sargatha has the ability to cast spells.

4. After you beat the Golden Warrior and the 16-headed hydras, I recommend beating the lich and his guards (storm giants and Banite priests) by casting Fireball spells to kill the guards, then casting Disintegrate on the Dreadlord.

5. The Dreadlord's soul is to the north of the Throne Room.

Ethan Chamberlain
Phoenix AZ

Stellar Seven (Dynamix/Sierra)

1. If you're tired of being challenged, these hints should help you win this game far more easily and quickly. First, make certain to set your difficulty level to "easy."

2. Do not use any special weapons or items until the final world.

3. On the first world, you should concentrate on the obstacles. One of the obstacles can be blown up if it is shot enough times. Don't worry if you can't find the correct obstacle right away. Once the obstacle is destroyed, a blue warp link appears. Enter the warp link and you are

teleported to the fourth world.

4. There is another warp link in the fourth world. Find it in the same way, and you are teleported to the final world.


5. If your ship is damaged when you enter the last world, you may wish to purposefully die. Then you can continue at the beginning of that world with your full energy.

6. Use the "cat's eye" to see the invisible tanks on this world.

7. You can and should use just about all of your special equipment. Make sure you save one "super cannon" to defeat the final enemy.

8. When the Annihilator is beamed down, charge up to it while firing your super cannon.

Mike Jatzak
Livonia MI

That's all for this issue. Keep those hints coming in for your fellow gamers! Our H.E.L.P. line assists hundreds stuck in crazy quests and adventures full of beasts and goodies. Mail your letters to us at: 521 Czerny Street, Tracy CA 95376, U.S.A.; or, fax your communication to us at: (209) 832-5742. Until next month, game on! 

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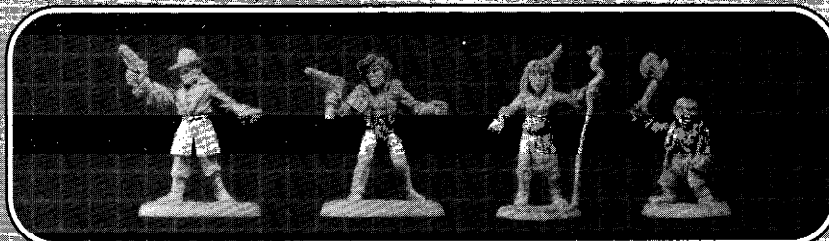
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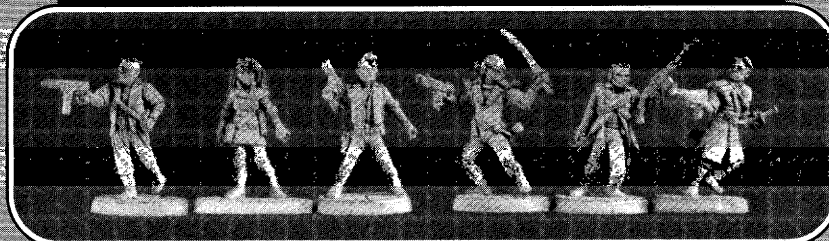
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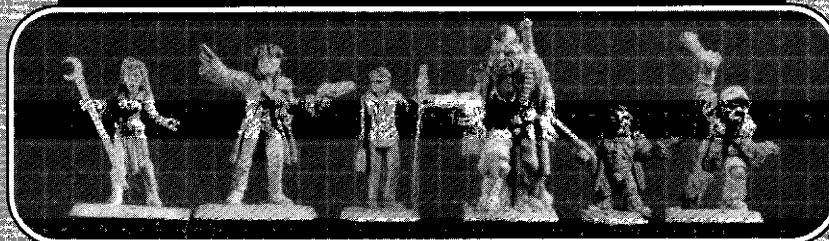


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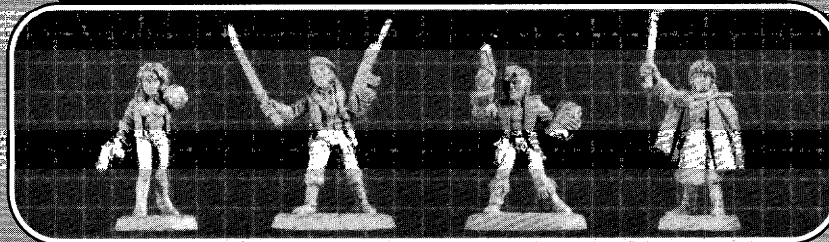
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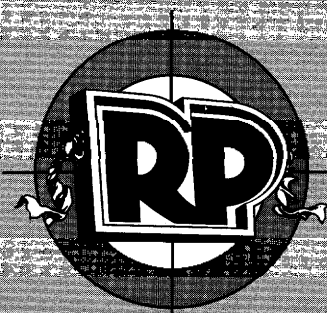
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>>>>[I spied this same fraggin' group of
razorguys jandering through the sprawl just
the other day! Bad news, chummers!!.....
NASTY! (Drummin' biz, no doubt...)]<<<<
- Gutterfly <21:46:05/10-22-50>

>>>>[Dull the drek out, hoser! We were
just on our way to the local time-passery to
hang for a while!!]<<<<
- Deckhead <21:48:36/05-22-50>



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Sorry, persons under 14 years of age cannot be admitted.
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☐

Cheque/PO to the value of _____ enclosed.

CONVENTION CALENDAR

Convention Calendar Policies

This column is a service to our readers worldwide. Anyone may place a free listing for a game convention here, but the following guidelines **must** be observed.

In order to ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be either typed double-spaced or printed legibly on standard manuscript paper. The contents of each listing must be short and succinct.

The information given in the listing **must** include the following, in this order:

1. Convention title and dates held;
2. Site and location;
3. Guests of honor (if applicable);
4. Special events offered;
5. Registration fees or attendance requirements; and,
6. Address(es) and telephone number(s) where additional information and confirmation can be obtained.

Convention flyers, newsletters, and other mass-mailed announcements will not be considered for use in this column; we prefer to see a cover letter with the announcement as well. No call-in listings are accepted. Unless stated otherwise, all dollar values given for U.S. and Canadian conventions are in U.S. currency.

WARNING: We are not responsible for incorrect information sent to us by convention staff members. Please check your convention listing carefully! Our wide circulation ensures that over a quarter of a million readers worldwide see each issue. Accurate information is your responsibility.

Copy deadlines are the last Monday of each month, two months prior to the on-sale date of an issue. Thus, the copy deadline for the December issue is the last Monday of October. Announcements for North American and Pacific conventions must be mailed to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. Announcements for Europe must be posted an additional month before the deadline to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON® Magazine, TSR Limited, 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom.

If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been cancelled, the dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, please contact us immediately. Most questions or changes should be directed to the magazine editors at TSR, Inc., (414) 248-3625 (U.S.A.). Questions or changes concerning European conventions should be directed to TSR Limited, (0223) 212517 (U.K.).

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JANCON II, Jan. 17-19, 1992 CT

This RPGA™ Network club-sponsored convention will be held at the Quality Inn in New Haven, Conn. Events include Network tournaments, a benefit for the Literacy Volunteers of America, and AD&D®, BATTLETECH®, CALL OF CTHULHU®, DIPLOMACY®, WARHAMMER®, and STAR FLEET BATTLES® games. Other activities include a costume party, a miniatures-painting contest, a movie room, and an expanded dealers' area. Send an SASE to: JANCON II, c/o TimeWarpers, P.O. Box 55552, Bridgeport CT 06610; or call: (203) 371-4330.

PANDEMONIUM IX, Jan. 18-19 *

This convention will be held at the Ryerson Hub Cafeteria, Jorgenson Hall, Ryerson Polytechnical Institute in Toronto, Ontario. Events include two game auctions, over 60 games, a miniatures contest, and many local dealers. Prizes will be awarded to tournament winners. Registration: \$20 (Canadian)/weekend, or \$15/Saturday and \$10/Sunday. Write to: PANDEMONIUM IX, c/o 17B Wales Ave., Toronto, Ontario, CANADA M5T 1J2; or call: (416) 597-1934.

WRIGHT STATE U. GAME FAIR OH Jan. 18-19

This convention will be held on the main campus of Wright State University in Fairborn, Ohio. Events include introductory sessions on role-playing by Shield Games, a parents' session on role-playing games, and RPGA™ Network events. Registration fees have not yet been set, but there will be discounts for attending both days, for RPGA™ Network members and qualifying GMs. Write to: Scott Hala, Game Fair Director, WSU Adventurers' Guild, PO. Box 31016, Dayton OH 45431-0016.

PROJECT GENESIS X, Jan. 19-20 CA

This P.A.L. Publishing convention will be held at the Hacienda Convention Center in Fresno, Calif. Events include BATTLETECH®, AD&D®, STAR FLEET BATTLES®, TOON®, and STAR WARS® games. Other activities include computer games, anime, a miniatures contest, and a swap meet. Registration: \$12. Make checks payable to P.A.L. Publishing. Dealers and judges are welcome! Write to: P.A.L. Publishing, 5415 E. Washington, Fresno CA 93727; or call: (209) 456-1668.

GENERICON VIII, Jan. 24-26 NY

This convention will be held on Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute's campus in Troy, N.Y. Events include an AD&D® tournament, plus CHAMPIONS®, CALL OF CTHULHU®, PARANOIA®, WARHAMMER 40,000® and The Avalon Hill Game Company's games. Registration: \$14 preregistered, and \$17 at the door. Please make checks payable to R.S.F.A. Write to: R.S.F.A., Student Union, R.P.I., Troy NY 12180-3590; or call Ben at: (518) 276-7949.

SWANCON 17, Jan. 24-27 ♦

This three-in-one convention will be held at the Ascot Convention Center in Perth, Western Australia. Events include SF/F panels, an anime festival, and numerous role-playing and board games with the PARSEC game convention. Guests include Terry Dowling, Nick Stathopoulos, and Philippa Madden. Accommodations will be available. Write for costs. Write to: SWANCON 17, P.O. Box 227, North Perth, Western Australia 6006, AUSTRALIA; or call Jeremy: (09) 340 8901 during working hours.

CANCON 14, Jan. 25-27 ♦

This convention will be held at the University of Canberra in Bruce, ACT, Australia. Events include Australian ancients titles, DIPLOMACY® games, and 20 role-playing tournaments, including several RPGA™ Network events. Write to: CANCON, c/o Wes Nicholson, GPO Box 1016, Canberra, ACT, AUSTRALIA 2601; or call: (06) 254-9926 days.

FANTASY WORLD '92, Jan. 25-26 ♦

This convention will be held at the Handelsbeurs in Antwerp, Belgium. Events include a celebration of J. R. R. Tolkien's 100th birthday. The special guest is Dave (Darth Vader) Prowse. Other activities include a parade, swordfighting and martial-arts demos, board and role-playing games, graffiti art, a castle-model auction, music, films, and miniatures and paintings exhibitions. Write to: Palantir vzw, P.O. Box 461, 2000 Antwerp 1, BELGIUM.

GAMICON BETA, Jan. 31-Feb. 1 IA

This convention, sponsored by the SFLIS, will be held at the Wesley Foundation in Iowa City, Iowa. David "Zeb" Cook will be our guest of honor. Events include AMBER®, AD&D®, CALL OF CTHULHU®, PARANOIA®, ROLEMASTER®, TORC®, VAMPIRE®, STAR FLEET BATTLES®, CHAMPIONS®, COSMIC ENCOUNTER®, ARKHAM HORROR®, TOON®, and NUCLEAR WAR® games. Other activities include historical games and a dealers' area. Registration: \$15. All games are free! Write to: GAMICON BETA, c/o ICON, P.O. Box 525, Iowa City IA 52244-0525; or call: (319) 354-2236.

REDCON '92, Jan. 31-Feb. 1 *

This gaming convention will be held at the Royal Military College of Canada in Kingston, Ontario. Events include role-playing, strategy, tactical, and miniatures games. Guests include Sam Lewis, Margaret Weis, and Tracy Hickman. Registration: \$10 (Canadian)/weekend. Write to: Combat Simulations Group, ATTN.: OCdt Yarker (6 Sqn), Royal Military College, Kingston, Ontario, CANADA, K7K 5L0; or call: (613) 541-6322.

VANDERCON II, Jan. 31-Feb. 2 TN

This convention will be held at the Sarraatt Student Center on the campus of Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tenn. Events include CIVILIZATION®, EMPIRE BUILDER®, TALISMAN®, AD&D®, WARHAMMER 40,000®, and CAR WARS® games. Registration: \$5/weekend. Judges are welcome! Write to: W. Bozarth, League of Gamers and Role-players, Box 4447-B, Vanderbilt Univ., Nashville TN 37235; or call either: (615) 421-6209 or Wayne at (615) 421-6209.

EGYPTIAN CAMPAIGN '92, Feb. 7-9 IL

This convention will be held at the Student Center on the campus of Southern Ill. Univ. in Carbondale, Ill. Events include RPGA™ Network AD&D® and MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ tourna-

- ♦ indicates an Australian convention.
- * indicates a Canadian convention.
- ♦ indicates a European convention.

ments, plus WARHAMMER 40,000*, SHADOW-RUN*, and CHAMPIONS* games. There will also be a game auction and a miniatures contest. Registration: \$8/weekend preregistered; \$10/weekend or \$3-\$5/day at the door. Single-day passes will be available. Send an SASE to: SIU Strategic Games Society, Office of Student Development, Southern Ill. Univ., Carbondale IL 62901-4425; or call: (618) 529-4630.

WARCON '92, Feb. 7-9 TX

This convention will be held at the Memorial Student Center on the campus of Texas A&M University in College Station, Tex. Events include AD&D® CHAMPIONS*, CAR WARS*, STAR FLEET BATTLES*, AXIS & ALLIES*, WAR AT SEA*, SIXTH FLEET*, CYBERPUNK*, GURPS*, SPACE HULK*, TORC*, and SHADOWRUN* games. Other activities include numerous WWII war games, naval miniatures, microarmor, and computer games. Registration: \$10/weekend preregistered, or \$12/weekend at the door. Write to: MSC NOVA, Box J1, College Station TX 78440-9081; or call: (409) 845-1515.

CLUB CON I, Feb. 8-9 OH

This RPG-only convention, sponsored by an RPGA™ Network club, will be held at the Holiday Inn Hudson in Hudson, Ohio. Events include RPG tournaments featuring AD&D®, PARANOIA*, TORC*, CALL OF CTHULHU*, CHAMPIONS*, SHADOWRUN*, RAVENLOFT™, and STAR WARS* games. Other activities include a miniatures-painting contest and a dealers' room. Registration: \$11.50/weekend preregistered; \$13.50/weekend or \$8.50/day at the door. Write to: CLUB CON I, PO. Box 142, Kent OH 44240-0003; or call: (216) 673-2117.

BSC's WRATH OF CON, Feb. 14-16 NY

This convention will be held at Ketchum Hall on the State Univ. of New York College campus in Buffalo, N.Y. Events include role-playing games and dealers' tables. Registration: \$4/weekend preregistered, and \$5/weekend at the door. Single-day and Saturday & Sunday passes are available. Write to: Michael Desing, Tower 3 Room 730C, SUCAB, P.O. Box 5119, ML Box 730C, Buffalo NY 14213-5119; or call: (716) 878-6374.

CHIMERA CON VIII, Feb. 14-16 NC

This SF/fantasy convention will be held at the University of North Carolina Student Union in Chapel Hill, N.C. Events include panels, workshops, games, and an auction. Registration: \$15. Write to: CHIMERA CON VIII, 6H Kingswood Apts., Chapel Hill NC 27516.

CONTINUITY V, Feb. 14-16 AL

This SF&F/gaming convention will be held at the Parliament House in Birmingham, Ala. Guests include Harry Turtledove, Brad Strickland, David & Elissa Martin, and Jerry & Sharon Ahern. Activities include role-playing, board, miniatures, and computer gaming, with a hospitality suite, a video room, an art show, a dealers' room, a costume contest, a dance, and panels. Registration: \$20 until 1/19/92; \$25 thereafter. Dealers are welcome! Write to: CONTINUITY 620 80th Place S., Birmingham AL 35206; or call: (205) 836-6460.

DUNDRACON XVI, Feb. 14-17 CA

This convention will be held at the San Ramon Marriott, in San Ramon, Calif. (Mention DUNDRACON for special hotel rates.) Events include over 120 games using virtually every system now in print. Other activities include seminars, board games, miniatures games, a flea market, a miniatures-painting contest, a dealers' room,

and open gaming. Registration: \$25/weekend until Feb. 1; \$30/weekend or \$15/day at the door. Write to: DUNDRACON, 386 Alcatraz Ave., Oakland CA 94618.

ORCCON 15, Feb. 14-17 CA

This convention will be held at the L. A. Airport Hyatt Hotel in Los Angeles CA. Events include all types of family, strategy, and adventure board, role-playing, miniatures, and computer gaming. Other activities include flea markets, an auction and an exhibitor's area. Write to: STRATEGICON, P.O. Box 3849, Torrance CA 90510-3849; or call: (310) 326-9440.

VISIONQUEST 2, Feb. 14-16 MO

This convention will be held at the Quality Inn North in Springfield, Mo. Events include RPG and WRG tournaments, plus WARHAMMER 40,000* games, open gaming, *Star Trek* activities, a dealers' room, plus costume and figure-painting contests. Registration: \$12.50 before Jan 31; \$15 at the door. Send an SASE to: VISIONQUEST 3821-D S. Campbell, Springfield MO 65807; or call: (417) 886-8482, 2-8 P.M. only.

ECLECTICON VI, Feb. 15-17 CA

This SF/F convention will be held at the Sacramento Hilton Inn in Sacramento, Calif. Guests include George R. R. Martin and Delight Prescott; the dead guest of honor is Mary Shelley. Activities include panels, seminars, workshops, and a blood drive on Feb. 16. Registration: \$40. Write to: ECLECTICON VI, #176 P.O. Box 19040, Sacramento CA 95814.

TOTAL CONFUSION VI, Feb. 21-23 MA

This convention will be held at the Best Western Royal Plaza Hotel in Marlborough, Mass. Events include AD&D®, GURPS*, BATTLE-TECH*, SPACE HULK*, DIPLOMACY*, CHAMPIONS*, CALL OF CTHULHU*, CAR WARS*, and AXIS & ALLIES* games. Other activities include RPGA™ Network events, a miniatures-painting contest, and a costume competition. Registration: \$22/weekend or \$8.50/day preregistered, \$10/day at the door. Write to: TOTAL CONFUSION, P.O. Box 1463, Worcester MA 01607; or call: (508) 987-1530.

GAMER'S DELIGHT '92, Feb. 22

The Quebec Gamers' Assoc. presents this gaming convention at the John F. Kennedy School, 3030 Villieray, Montreal, Quebec. Activities include an AD&D® 2nd Edition tournament, an art show, war games, board games, and role-playing games. Registration: \$12 (Canadian) preregistered before Feb. 14; higher fees thereafter. Write to: Quebec Gamers' Assoc., C.P. 63, succ M, Montreal, Quebec, CANADA H1V 3L6; or call Christine at: (514) 596-0115.

JAXCON '92, Feb. 28-March 1 FL

This gaming convention will be held at the Radisson Inn at the Jacksonville International Airport in Jacksonville, Fla. Events include role-playing, board, and war games. Write to: JAXCON '92, P.O. Box 4423, Jacksonville FL 32201; or call Kathy at: (904) 778-1730.

TOURNAMENT IN SHADOW

Feb. 28-March 1 *

This convention, sponsored by the Univ. of Alberta Phantasy Gamers' Club will be held at the Student Union on the Univ. of Alberta campus in Edmonton, Alberta. Events include AD&D®, CYBERPUNK*, WARHAMMER FANTASY BATTLE*, and TALISMAN* games. Other activities include a video room and a miniatures-painting workshop. Admission to the event is "a

single loonie"; admission to tournaments is about \$10 (Canadian) each. Write to: UAPGC, Box 46, Students Union Bldg., Univ. of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, CANADA T6G 2J7.

WESCON II, Feb. 28-March 1 CT

This gaming convention will be held at the Holiday Inn in Cromwell, Conn. Events include RPGA™ Network tournaments, with MIGHTY EMPIRES*, BLOODBOWL*, TALISMAN*, GURPS*, and AD&D® games. Other activities include board games, war games, SCA demos, a human chess game, a miniatures-painting contest, dealers, an art exhibit, and an auction. Guest artist is Batton "Wolff & Byrd" Lash. Registration: \$15/weekend before Jan. 31, or \$20 thereafter. Send an SASE to: Games & Stuff, 501 Main St., Middletown CT 06457; or call: (203) 344-8895 during business hours.

OWLCON XIII, March 6-8 TX

This gaming convention, sponsored by WARP and RSFAFA, will be held on the campus of Rice University in Houston TX. Events include RUNE-QUEST*, CALL OF CTHULHU*, PARANOIA*, CAR WARS*, TRAVELLER*, DIPLOMACY*, ILLUMINATI*, CIVILIZATION*, BATTLETECH*, ASL*, and STAR FLEET BATTLES* games. Open gaming and other tournaments will be held. Registration: \$12/three days before Feb. 25; \$14/three days, or \$5-6/day at the door. One-day passes will be available. Registration will be held in Sewall Hall. Write to: WARP, OWLCON Preregistration, PO. Box 1892, Houston TX 77251. Make checks payable to WARP

PLATTECON EPSILON, March 6-8 WI

This convention will be held at the Student Center on the campus of the University of Wisconsin-Platteville in Platteville, Wis. Events include AD&D® games, a miniatures contest, a LAZER TAG* tournament, and a special guest. Registration: \$5/weekend or \$4/day preregistered, \$8/weekend or \$5/day at the door. Write to: Platteville Gaming Assoc., Student Center, 1 University Plaza, Platteville WI 53818.

SCRYCON '92, March 7 NY

Sponsored by the Seekers of the Crystal Monolith, this convention will be held at the Oakwood School in Poughkeepsie, N.Y. Events include AD&D® games and other RPGA™ tournaments, a miniatures contest, and a used-game flea market. Registration: \$6 preregistered; \$8 at the door. Send an SASE to: SCRYCON '92, P.O. Box 896, Pleasant Valley NY 12569. Seating is limited: please preregister!

BASHCON '92, March 13-15 OH

This convention will be held in the University of Toledo's Student Union Auditorium in Toledo, Ohio. The special guest is Michael Dorn. Events include RPGA™ tournaments, AD&D®, PARANOIA*, and other games. Other activities include panels, anime and SF films, a dealers' room, plus miniatures and board games. Registration: \$3/weekend; or \$1-2/day. Games are \$.50 each. Send an SASE to: Student Activities Office, UT-BASH, 2801 W. Bancroft St., Toledo OH 43606.

CALCON 7, March 13-15 *

This convention will be held in the Sandman Inn in Calgary, Alberta. Events include tournaments in role-playing, board, war, and miniatures gaming. Other activities include a dealers' room, computer gaming, a games auction, and a miniatures-painting contest. Registration: \$8 before Feb. 14. Write to: CALCON 7, Gulf Canada Sq., RPO 401, 9 Ave. SW, Box 22206, Calgary,

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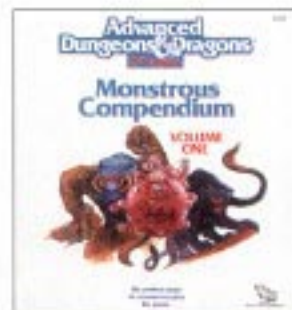
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This gaming convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Chesapeake House in Aberdeen, Md. Events include AD&D®, WARHAMMER®, SHADOWRUN®, CALL OF CTHULHU®, PARANOIA®, BATTLESYSTEM™, BATTLETECH®, CAR WARS®, and TALISMAN® games. Other activities include a dealers' room, a miniatures contest, and seminars. Registration: \$16 before Feb. 15; \$20 thereafter. Write to: DEMICON III, Hartford Adventure Soc., c/o Strategic Castle, 114 N. Toll Gate Rd., Bel Air MD 21014; or call: (301) 569-4025.

SIMCON XIV, March 19-22 NY

This convention, sponsored by URSGA, will be held at the University of Rochester's River campus in Rochester NY. Events include CYBERPUNK®, STAR FLEET BATTLES®, CHAMPIONS®, STAR TREK®, TRAVELLER®, and fantasy role-playing games. Other activities include board, tactical, and 15-mm and 25-mm historical miniatures games. Registration: \$7 before March 2; \$10 thereafter. Write to: SIMCON XIV, c/o URSGA, CPU Box 227146, River Station, Rochester NY 14627-7146.

LUNACON '92, March 20-22 NY

This convention will be held at the Rye Town Hilton in Rye Brook, N.Y. Events include 24-hour open gaming, RPGA™ tournaments, and the state's premier SF convention. Registration: \$25 until Feb. 22; \$35 at the door gains admission to all convention events. Write to: LUNACON '92,

P.O. Box 338, New York NY 10150-0338; or call: (908) 721-1537. No collect calls, please.

SPRING OFFENSIVE III, March 20-22 IL

This convention will be held at Illinois Central College in East Peoria IL. Events include Napoleonic, ADEPTUS TITANICUS®, CHILL®, ASL®, and other role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Registration: \$3/day or \$5/weekend, and \$1 per game. Write to: Tri-County Gaming Assoc., 116 Walnut St., Washington IL; or call: (309) 444-4640.

AGGIECON XXIII, March 26-29 TX

This convention will be held on the campus of Texas A&M University in College Station, Tex. Guests include Barbara Hambly and David Drake. Activities include a dealers' room, game shows, a costume contest and ball, an art show, children's programming, Japanimation, SF films, a party room, RPGA™ tournaments, SCA demos, and 24-hour open gaming. Registration: \$13 before March 1; \$16 thereafter. Write to: AGGIECON XXIII, MSC Cepheid Variable, Box J-I, College Station TX 77884; or call: (409) 845-1515.

MAGNUM OPUS CON VII, March 26-29 SC

This convention will be held at the Greenville Hyatt and the Greenville Holiday Inn in Greenville, S.C. Guests include Marion Zimmer Bradley, Lois McMaster Bujold, Chelsea Quinn Yarbro, Roger Zelazny, Robert Asprin, and Sergio Aragones. Activities include panels, a costume contest, a dealers' room, a fashion show, fencing, gaming, and talent show. Registration: TBA. Send an SASE to: MOC, P.O. Box 6585, Athens GA 30604.

MIDSOUTHCON XI, March 27-29 TN

This SF&F convention will be held at the Airport Hilton in Memphis, Tenn. Guests include Margaret Weis, Beth Willinger, Glen Cook, and Belinda Anderson. Activities include AD&D®, CHAMPIONS®, CALL OF CTHULHU®, CYBERPUNK®, ROBOTECH®, BATTLETECH®, RIFTS®, SHADOWRUN®, and board games, plus panels, a dealers' room, an art show, an auction, filking, a con suite, and open gaming. Registration: \$25. Write to: PO. Box 2279, Memphis TN 38122; or call: (901) 353-9439 or (901) 274-7355.


ABBYTHON 10, March 28-29 KS

This convention will be held at the Community Center in Abbyville, Kans. Registration: \$10 preregistered only. Players will receive materials to create their own ABBYTHON characters. Prizes will be awarded to top ten players. Write to: ABBYTHON Adventure Guild, PO. Box 96, Abbyville KS 67510; or call: (316) 286-5303.

DREAMCON '92, March 28-29 MO

Sponsored by the NMSU Fantasy Club, this convention will be held at Ophelia Parrish Hall on the campus of Northeast Missouri State University in Kirksville, MO. Events include AD&D®, CHAMPIONS®, and PARANOIA® games. Other activities include a movie room, a costume contest, merchants and more games. Proceeds will benefit the Dream Factory of St. Louis. Write to: NMSU Fantasy Club, SUB-NMSU, Kirksville MO 63501-4988; of call: (816) 785-5152.

How effective was your convention listing? If you are a convention organizer, please write to the editors and let us know if our "Convention Calender" served your needs. Your comments are always welcome.




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Princess Ark

Continued from page 50

There is a new CREATURE CRUCIBLE supplement coming in 1992 (Night Howlers), covering the werewolves of Glantri. They are forming a "legitimate" principality with the support of some members of the Glantrian Council. There are no plans at present for more in this series. Now would be the best time to voice your opinions and preferences as to the format, goal, or topics of future offerings. Your letters are always appreciated, and they do affect our decisions.

I'd like to see additional CREATURE CRUCIBLE supplements. Why not publish a few more on topics such as intelligent undead or dragons? Since these monsters are a lot more powerful than traditional adventurers, you could always provide adventures made exclusively for these types of player creatures.

Indeed, these characters are difficult to mix with standard adventurers. Adventures exclusively for such odd beings seem too restrictive. Part of the solution consists in providing a very specific campaign setting for use with these critters, along with plausible reasons for the setting to exist and solid ways for the DM to keep it under control. This works with lycanthropes. With more powerful individuals, such as greater undead or especially dragons, there are still a number of problems to iron out (their Experience Progression Tables reach daunting heights very quickly, for example). Those two ideas will require lots of development time.

I heard you were going to publish "Almanacs" in 1992. What are they going to be like?

The Poor Wizard's Almanacs are a series of pocket books that provide Jots of information on the Known World and the Hollow World in a simple, easily accessible format. Each book consists of two major sections. One section deals with past campaign information (a "Who's Who" of the D&D game world, with geographical and political information and too much other material to enumerate here). The other section provides about a year's worth of "future" world events to puzzle your players and occasionally rock the D&D game worlds. If our plans hold together, one Almanac should appear each year, with the newest one including the most important information published in the previous ones.

When will the D&D boxed set and the *Rules Cyclopedia* be printed in French, German, and Swedish?

The boxed set is currently being printed in German and French; it is going to be a while longer before we see the Swedish version. Translations of the Cyclopedia will also have to wait.

Where is Hule?

Looking at the Outer World planetary map provided in the HOLLOW WORLD™ boxed set or in the Rules Cyclopedia, Hule would be located at the southwestern edge of the Black Mountains, north of the Serpent Peninsula, just east of the Yazak Steppes. If you have the older Master's DM Book, check the map inside the cover; Hule is located between areas #26 and #27.

I was hoping you would be able to answer a few more questions on Immortals, especially since the update on the Immortals will come out until 1992. Why weren't the Lawful Order of Forsetta and the Temple of Spuming Nooga mentioned in GAZ7 *The Northern Reaches*? What are the alignments, spheres, and powers of the following immortals: Thendara, Arik, Gorm, Usamigaras, Madarua, Chardastes, and Lepta (B1-9 *In Search of Adventure*); Cretia, Tubak, and Yamuga (GAZ12 *The Golden Khan of Ethengar*), Orcus and Demogorgon (*Dungeon Masters Companion*); Tallirai, Sharpcrest, Slizzard, Malafor, Kallal, Gorzlok, Crakkak, Polunius, and Saasskas (PC3 *The Sea People*); and, finally, Bozdogan (this column in DRAGON issue #173). Are Wildeye Auger, Minroth (GAZ9 *Minrothad Guilds*), and Chiron (PC1 *Tall Tales of the Wee Folk*) now Immortals?

Eeep! I passed this question along to Aaron Allston, who is currently working on the upcoming Wrath of the Immortals boxed set (due out in August 1992). His answer: "Argh! Please, no more Immortals!" When Aaron did the preliminary research on Immortals, he ended up with over 100. At the time we received this letter, it was hard to tell whether or not we would be able to include all these fellows (we'll try, trust us).

Several other things may happen. Some of these Immortals might have gone away to other dimensions, some might have been destroyed in some fantastic battle, and some might be separate identities of other Immortals. For example, Bozdogan is none other than Loki. The Immortals favored by the people of Robrenn are yet another example of this. This approach helps keep the number of Immortals under control. For the moment, we can assume Chiron, Auger, and Minroth still haven't made it to Immortality. Until the final design is complete, I'd rather not reveal too much, since this may conflict with the final material. Thanks for the list, by the way; you named a few that we had overlooked. More later.

Who or what is Orcus? In what way is Orcus of the D&D game connected to the Orcus of the Bloodstone module series, set in the AD&D® FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign setting?

In the D&D game, Orcus was a demon. For various reasons, we are now calling these creatures fiends. They are a type of Immortal creature originally described in the older Immortals Set. They will be

detailed in the upcoming Wrath of the Immortals boxed set. Beings also known as fiends exist in the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting. As far as the D&D universe is concerned, the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting is part of a separate reality, and the AD&D game's Orcus and Demogorgon are different entities. They are similar in that they are the embodiment of all that is evil in both game worlds.

When *Wrath of the Immortals* is released, will there be three interlocking worlds (Known World/Hollow World/Wrath)? When is it due out?

Wrath of the Immortals is not a game setting. It provides hefty background and rules for the D&D game's Immortals and a campaign saga. As a setting, it provides information on outer planes and a magical city, sort of a neutral safe ground where Immortals can meet without danger.

As an avid D&D game player and reader of your column, I would like to take this opportunity to make a few points to my fellow gamers.

1. Are you fed up with there being few specific articles for the D&D game in DRAGON® Magazine? The solution is simple: adapt other things! In my campaign, I am using five of the seven characters from last year's AD&D trading cards. My main PC is Caramon Majere, now a 17th-level paladin of Halav. I created his background for the D&D game, and he turned out to be an interesting character to play.

2. Do you want more monsters? Either buy the D&D game's *Creature Catalogue* or the AD&D 2nd Edition game's *Monstrous Compendium* volumes. Bear in mind that although you may need to make superficial changes to the monsters, the experience-point values in the AD&D game are often quite high; for example, a D&D-game beholder is worth 5,100 XP, against the AD&D game's 14,000. I use the *Monstrous Compendium* as a source of D&D-game species variants.

3. The SPELLJAMMER™ setting: Should I use it? Yes and no. Use it if you think your campaign is ready for it. In my campaign (AC 1003), skyships are becoming popular in magically comfortable regions (Alphatia, Thyatis, Darokin, Karameikos, and Glantri). Spelljamming helms are rare, though, and should be limited to Alphatia or Seraine, as they have an abundance of skyships and experience in the matter.

Announcement!

We are pleased to announce that the D&D game will finally be blessed with a brand-new series of novels. Coming in the fall of 1992, the first novel in the Penhaligon Trilogy, *The Tainted Sword*, will reveal the story of a great knight, his companions, and a long-time enemy who has sworn his doom. Don't miss it! Ω

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FORUM

"Forum" welcomes your comments and opinions on role-playing games. In the United States and Canada, write to: Forum, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147 U.S.A. In Europe, write to: Forum, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd, 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom. We ask that material submitted to "Forum" be either neatly written by hand or typed with a fresh ribbon and clean keys so we can read and understand your comments.

I would like to respond to Andrew M. Curtis's dilemma in DRAGON issue #172 on how to keep party members from slaying the NPCs that the DM introduces.

As a DM for the AD&D 1st Edition game, I have run into this problem before. I found that the best solution is to take points off the offending character's charisma. Charisma, as described by the Players *Handbook*, is the measure of the character's combined physical attractiveness, persuasiveness, and personal magnetism. It is important to all characters, as it has an effect on dealing with others, like NPCs, mercenary hirelings, prospective retainers, and monsters.

While losing points from charisma does not affect low-level characters to a great degree, it can come back to haunt them when it is time to receive followers. For clerics, this would be a die modifier for the amount of troops they receive. Simply convert the Reaction Adjustment Modifier into a single number; e.g., 20% becomes -2, and 25% would become -3 (always round up). Rangers would use the modifier to determine which sub-table to use in the Dungeon *Masters Guide*. Rogues use the Reaction Adjustment Modifier to determine the levels of their underlings.

If this does not keep the party from slaying NPCs, it is time to dust off the FIEND FOLIO® tome and turn to page 51. The offending character has angered his god and is visited by a hound of ill omen to bring the character back into line. This should only be used as a last resort.

I hope this helps your party interact with NPCs better. Remember if you are going to take points from a character's charisma for bad play, you should also give points for good play.

Harald Jeffery
Ft. Irwin CA

I am writing in response to Andrew Curtis's letter in "Forum," DRAGON issue #172. Indeed, having your NPCs survive their first encounter with your PCs can be difficult, but it sounds as though his problem is especially bad.

It's not easy to say for sure without knowing what his party is like, but the first thing that comes to my mind is the fact that these PCs may be acting way outside of their alignment. Assuming that the party is basically good, then cutting down a person in cold blood just to steal his equipment is a very evil act, one for which

good PCs should be strictly punished. If this is the case, Mr. Curtis can probably solve his problem simply by "reminding" the PCs of their alignment and warning them of the penalties for going against one's alignment.

However, this subtle approach may not work; it sounds as though his players are more interested in wholesale hacking and slashing than they are in actually role-playing their characters. Therefore, he may have to use a more heavy-handed tactic. He could, for example, explain to the players ahead of time that he will be introducing an NPC into the game and that its purpose is to aid the party. He should then point out that the NPC is important to the design of the adventure and the campaign, and that anybody acting directly against the NPC will quickly earn the DM's extreme displeasure. Most players should realize exactly how difficult the DM can make things for them if he wants to. This is a rather crude method, so I don't like to use it often, but with some players it may be the only option that will work.

If neither of these methods work, my suggestion would be to just not give them an NPC. If the players aren't going to "play nice" and cooperate, then let them suffer from not having the NPC to rely on. If you want to be really mean, put an NPC into the party and make no objection when the party does its regular stab-him-in-the-back routine. Then, design an encounter of some sort in which the party is on the losing side, and the only way to win would have been through the aid of the now-deceased NPC. Don't kill anybody, but rough them up enough so they will regret not keeping the NPC around.

This brings up another question: Why are there NPCs in the party in the first place? From his letter, it sounds like Mr. Curtis is using NPCs as full-time party members, which is something I don't like to do in my games. At most, NPCs should serve as henchmen or squires to one of the party members, not as the party's cleric, thief, etc. The whole point of the game is to let the players role-play their characters, and they should sink or swim based on their own abilities. An NPC should be a tool to help the party, not a crutch for it to lean on. If your party needs another fighter, then you either need a few more players or you need to tone down your adventures a little. In the long run, plugging the gap with an NPC won't solve anything.

Ian Johnsson
Asheville NC

I am writing in reply to Andrew M. Curtis's letter in DRAGON issue #172 concerning the use of NPCs in his campaign. I am also the DM for an adventuring group on occasion. Andrew states that he has problems when he makes the NPCs too powerful and they dominate the game.

I would suggest that Andrew create an NPC that is not powerful as a combatant but rather is a source of information. In this way, the PCs

do not feel inferior to him in any way. An old, seasoned adventurer whose fighting skills have faded seems hopeless, but his many years of experience might make him valuable. This also promotes role-playing, because after the NPC yells to the PCs what he thinks they should do, they get to do the actual fighting and decision-making. The NPC should not just be an information booth, however. He could be old and may need protection. Naturally, the PCs do not want to lose a valuable source of information, and he might have no valuables worth killing him for!

On the other hand, you could actually make the NPC strong enough to stand on his own against the PCs, while retaining his wisdom and experience. I wouldn't allow that NPC to kill any PCs, though, if a fight should occur. You can try to discourage this by showing how easily the NPC handles other opponents and exudes an aura of experience. If the PCs play their cards right, they could learn a lot from their "big brother."

In either case, the NPC can be used to gently steer the party in the right direction during a game. He can become a storyteller, offering adventure hooks. In order to keep the NPC as an advisor and not the leader, occasionally have the NPC give some bad advice that the PCs can detect, so they can make their own unbiased decisions on what to do.

If the PCs insist on attempting to kill this NPC, have the loss of knowledge and experience be felt. Perhaps the old man knew a secret entrance to an area that is heavily guarded; now the PCs will have a much harder time getting in. I hope this helps anyone with this problem.

C. J. Calo
Tuckahoe NY

This is in response to Mr. Curtis's "Forum" letter in DRAGON issue #172. Just reading it bothered me, as there are always two sides to every story. I've been a DM for over 11 years, but I've never run into anything like this. Perhaps your NPCs are toting around really good stuff that the characters have a hard time finding any other way. Try equipping the NPCs with more mundane items, the kind the group already has or doesn't want. . . .

You could also take the players' hints and simply stop using NPCs. If they don't go out of their way to hire them, and they are surviving well enough on their own, forget it! If you insist on trying, however, either your players are trying to bug you or are hopelessly sadistic.

Now, it could be your fault, too. Do these NPCs constantly act like an annoying celebrity—a Danny DeVito dwarf or an Alan Alda thief, for example? Perhaps the NPCs appear too mild and present themselves as easy pickings. . . . The NPC in question could always be a sibling or other relative to a party member. That should put at least one character on his side, but the way you've described these guys, they would probably rob their own mothers. As a final

solution, if the party has only three or four characters, have a mercenary group (20-30 NPCs) hire them on to help on a crusade, but after seeing their treasure the NPCs try to rob and leave the PCs for dead. The PCs may just think twice before their next murder!

You may print my address if you want.

Jeff Ibach
9 Gallavan Way
Mercerville NJ 08619

I would like to comment on Christine Wellman's comments in DRAGON issue #166, concerning alignment and tendencies. I compliment her and her fellow gamers for the system they developed for tendencies. Such a system promotes role-playing rather than role-assumption. . . . I would like to point out that ICE/Hero Games' CHAMPIONS* game dealt with this in its Disadvantage rules from the very first edition, encouraging the development, of non-point tendencies to add depth to PCs and NPCs. Steve Jackson incorporated it into the slightly-similar GURPS rules as "quirks," used to round out the character and complete the balancing process. GMs may benefit from perusing other games even if they have no intention of ever playing them, simply searching for ways to express character traits and game nuances that their favorite system may not have dealt with in detail, if at all.

In fact, combining functional elements of my favorite games is one of the reasons I've stayed with gaming as long as I have. When I first started gaming, the gaming lines were strict—not that it stopped us. My gaming group was nurtured on comic books in which barbarians with swords fought side-by-side with cyberwarriors, and mages regularly blew holes in both spaceships and mutants. We adapted our games with our creativity, and we were the better for it. Dimension-hopping Roman foot soldiers with M-16s and journeys to the Vietnam War were a constant, confusing reality challenge (and role-playing challenge) for our AD&D characters. Ten years ago, we were the weirdos of the local gaming circuit. Now we're "vogue."

All of this current "cross-gaming" is fabulous, but comparing systems and doing a little tasteful swap-and-borrow to improve playability is more important than ever. There are many excellent concepts on the market, and I can't wait to try all of them, from West End Games' TORG* game to TSR's SPELLJAMMER™ campaign. If I find a part of a game that seems lacking or needed, it's worthwhile to have numerous examples at hand of how other systems have dealt with that section, to save me valuable time as a GM and to help me develop a fair and balanced addition to the rules.

I would also like to address the issue of pre-generated gaming materials, brought up by Craig Hardie in the same issue. I don't have an organized argument for or against it, but I do have a few points of personal experience to add.

I work 40-50 hours a week, in addition to attempting to attend school and get my degree sometime before I turn 30. I love gaming with a passion, but I simply don't have the hours of research time to devote to it like I did when I was in high school. Without pregenerated materials, I would have been forced to give up the quality of detail in my campaign and perhaps the campaign itself, years ago. In addition, there are thousands of details about medieval/fantasy sociology and technology to which I have been only superficially exposed, and the combination of novels and pregenerated source books have given me tremendous amounts of material to work with.

However, there are two major downsides that I have noticed in using pregenerated materials. First, if I can buy them, so can my players. My current circle of gamers would never stoop to cheating, because they play for the surprise and adventure of our cooperative world, but in the good old days we had many players who somehow knew how to trigger that hidden passage-way, where to look for the treasure, or even which spells would be the best to have for the adventure. Some of the other players were DMs, too, and were familiar with the material because they had used it as well. My group got in the habit of announcing which modules were going to be purchased and asking the other players not to use them. We also took the precaution of never running a module in its pure form, but rather taking a tavern from here, a nobleman from there, and combining these select elements with our own creations to make a totally unique campaign. It saved a lot of time and preserved the element of surprise.

Second, money is a factor. Buying all those source books and campaign supplements can easily run into hundreds of dollars. One of the things we used to love about gaming was that we could always afford it: one or two rule books, a handful of dice, your character sheet and a pencil, and taa daa! You were there! My first campaign was completely unique, pulled from the recesses of my own imagination, mistakes and all, and my players loved every minute of it. I would just like to remind every one that it can still be done that way, and it is just as much fun as using pregenerated materials—maybe more. Every single piece of pregenerated material had to start as a hand-made and self-created campaign in someone's living room once upon a time.

William Lee Williams
Denver CO

I am writing in response to Craig Hardie's letter in DRAGON issue #166. I generally agree with what he has said on the subject of pregenerated campaign worlds in the AD&D and the D&D® game systems.

He and I share a common history in that I, too, began DMing shortly after I began playing. It seems that those of our ilk are destined to have the desire to create our own unique worlds, I, however, have only been DMing for five years, so I doubt that my world is as complete as his. Yet I can assure him that my creative desire is just as great.

All of the above creates a somewhat contradictory situation. As a DM who takes pride in the detail and the diversity of my game world, I have always wanted players to appreciate this work of "art." Gradually, this desire to share my world has grown into dreams of putting it on the RPG market. It is very likely that this is the way in which some game worlds got on the market today. [It is.—The Editor.] In one sense, I am sympathetic to the creators of these worlds, yet I am also jealous that their worlds get so much coverage in DRAGON Magazine that the helpful articles that assist the building of my world are becoming few and far between.

Mr. Hardie is quite correct, in my opinion, about the place for pregenerated campaigns. Not that they aren't worthy of regular folk, but that they are ideal for the situation. Yet I realize that TSR, Inc. is a business and not a service, so I will not press the issue. I know that there is a market for these pregenerated campaigns, and removing them from the store shelves is not my goal. The issue that I would like to take, if I may, refers to the subject matter of the campaigns.

Many players that I know resent the fact that

their characters can write the course only of minor histories. All the major plot lines and adventures are preordained. When I ran my first campaign in my world, the outcome was always in question. The effect that the PCs had on the world's history depended on the effort they put into their adventure. This is how adventuring should be, in my opinion. There are some who would argue that a preordained history is acceptable for an AD&D campaign. No doubt they are among those inclined to debate the theories of time after seeing a *Back to the Future* movie. The DM should only go so far to tell a world's history, as extensively as he wishes, describe the world itself, and detail its high-profile characters.

The only acceptable prewritten history would be a day-by-day weather and natural-event calendar. Not only would this calendar be acceptable, it would be downright great. Perhaps a yearly almanac could be published for the respective worlds. I already have a format developed, so I am certain that it's feasible.

In conclusion, pregenerated campaigns have every right to be in DRAGON Magazine, as they make up a substantial portion of the gaming genre—but that portion is being given far too much print space for its relative size. I agree completely with Mr. Hardie when he says that these worlds and campaigns should not be given priority over the articles that assist the members of this society who make up the greatest portion, the players and the DMs.

Please remember us, and resume the excellent format of the magazine that made me an avid reader.

Angelo Barovier
Toronto, Ontario

I am writing concerning the article "Care For a Drink?" (DRAGON issue #171). Though the article mentions uses for the *decanter of endless* water as an offensive weapon, it failed to mention its defensive uses, and these can be great.

First, when used as a defense against dragons, the decanter (in geyser model can block most breath weapons. By pointing the geyser into the dragon's mouth, fiery breath is extinguished or reduced in effect. The same holds for heat breath. In the case of the white dragon's cold breath, this would freeze the geyser, which—with expert aim—could at that time be halfway down the poor beast's throat (painful!).

Against gas and cold breath weapons, aiming the geyser straight up to produce rain will cleanse the air almost instantly, though walking in acidic water could prove hazardous.

The one case in which the use of the decanter is not advised is against lightning breath. Salt water should not be used, as that will conduct electricity.

But enough of breath weapons. There is one very powerful use for the decanter as a weapon. Placing a heavy or sharp object in the neck and then calling a geyser will shoot out a very deadly missile (even more so if the object is wedged in so that pressure builds up first).

But I thought we were supposed to be nice guys. Help the world, use your decanter to work the perfect irrigation system!

Rick Tazzele
London, England

I play and DM the AD&D game and *Oriental Adventures*, and I have found that the Oriental classes promote individual player actions and discourage cooperation, making life very difficult for the DM.

The barbarian class cannot associate with wu jen or spirit folk. Any monk in the party is

probably learning martial arts special maneuvers, and so must spend six hours per week training with his master; this restricts the party to a very small area for adventuring. The yakuza class lacks the climb, find/remove traps, hear hoise, and backstab abilities, which means they are very weak outside their home territory. The samurai and ninja classes both have masters whom they must obey, and the sohei class is the worst, earning only half experience when not on a mission for their monasteries. The shukenja's restriction on killing is fine as long as he can subdue his opponents, but if the party is fighting one or two strong monsters, all of his subduing efforts are ruined by his sword-swinging companions.

All this means that the DM must come up with an extraordinary set of events for each encounter to satisfy each character. The rules should encourage cooperation within the party, not send them off in different directions.

Tony Martin
Dubbo, Australia

I recently acquired the DMGR2 *Castle Guide* supplement and was immediately taken by the history of and rules on castle building. While these core chapters of the book are simply excellent, the same cannot be said, unfortunately, of the introductory chapters on feudal society. Although I'm well aware that the DRAGON editorial staff is not directly responsible for TSR products, I am addressing my comments to your magazine as the best vehicle for communication with AD&D players out there.

I am quite aware of both the simplifications and the alterations necessary to merge the historical facts of an era dominated by Christianity with the magical, polytheistic universe of the AD&D fantasy world. For this reason, I shall not start nitpicking about every detail. However, I should like to challenge one point that tends to distort the whole picture of the Middle Ages: the repeated assertion that medieval serfs were not as miserable as one would think, and were certainly better off than the slaves of ancient civilizations.

In fact, the opposite would seem closer to the truth. A slave, bought for a considerable price and unable by law to care for himself, could normally expect to be kept alive and in good working trim, if only out of his master's business sense, while the serf would be left to fend for himself in daily matters. It is also worth noting here that the word serf is derived from the Latin *servus*, designating both the slaves of ancient Rome and the bondmen of medieval times (both treated by the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, incidentally, under the overall heading of "Servitude").

Certainly serfs were free as to their person—i.e., they did not belong bodily to the lord of the manor. However, the manorial land to which they were *hidebound* did, and this was the basis for lifelong hardship. Spending most of their time working the lord's fields or fulfilling other chores for their tenure, they had little time to cultivate the patch supposed to sustain them as well as pay for all taxes and fees mentioned in the *Castle Guide*.

Upon closer scrutiny, even a serf's personal freedom did not go very far. No travel was allowed except with the lords consent, for any fee the latter chose to name; the assertion to the contrary, on page 24 of the *Castle Guide*, is simply not true, as any history book on the period will show. No marriages were permitted without the lords agreement, either, with children from a mixed serf/yeoman marriage becoming serfs. While most lords would be

satisfied with a fee for the marriage license, some are known to have enforced their ancient right to the first night with the bride.

Of course, the peasant class as a whole represented the economic basis of the feudal pyramid, but as long as some manpower was available, the individual serf's well-being mattered little. Merciful care for the commoners was extolled by the Church, precisely because it was not implied by the system as such. Where manpower was in short supply, on the other hand, such as for clearing forested areas or resettling a region emptied by plague, serfdom proved unsuitable; any motivated work force had to be recruited from the yeoman population, with tax exemption, reduced military obligations, and choice of land being the usual incentives.

If the serfs' lives were any less miserable than depicted here, one wonders why so many attempted to flee to the precincts of a city, living in suburban slums, for the chance of shedding all obligations to their lord if he did not track them down and claim them within a year and a day. I fail to see any game-related reason why the AD&D game's feudal system should differ so much from historical fact on this subject. I have tried to keep my remarks as short as possible, and I hope you will find room to print them.

Stefan Schulz, M.A.
Bonn, Germany

I would like to make some commentary on the scale-armor issue brought up by the letter from Dave, Jon, and David Timmons, in DRAGON issue #167.

I am a professional armorer in the Society for Creative Anachronism. In my decade of experience with armor and its use in combat, I and a multitude of others have found scale armor to be an excellent form of defensive protection. Granted, the weapons we use are made of rattan, but one can easily calculate what the effects would be with steel. Scale armor is wondrously flexible, very good at distributing weight of blows, and also "breathes" well, not to mention the fact that it was much less expensive than chain mail. It would not crack or be cut away completely, as the Timmons say in their letter. The scales themselves have no more reason to crack than any other steel armor. A properly made coat would have its scales overlapping and mounted with rivets (reinforced with washers) in stout leather. This would keep scales tearing loose to an absolute minimum. The only time any of the scales in my armor have come loose have been in spots where the leather backing has rotted from years of use.

Scale has its disadvantages, like any armor. It makes a large amount of "ringing" as one moves about, and is particularly susceptible to thrusts from below. Chain mail, in comparison, is superior overall to scale, but it can be rent and torn by cuts and thrusts. The Timmons's remark that chain mail can be easily repaired by riveting is somewhat absurd. The rivet and surrounding metal would be the last thing to break, being locked tight and thicker than the rest of the link. A mail link would most likely be cracked or shorn somewhere along the circle where it is thinner. In the scenario on "bearded" (steel-edged) weapons that the Timmons postulate, the opposite would be true: A "bearded" axe would shear more easily through chain mail, rather than the higher-ridged scale armor. A further testimony to scale armor's worth is the fact that it never totally fell into disuse. Examples can be cited where it was integrated in with plate armor throughout the Middle Ages. Its cousins, the brigantine and Oriental

lamellar, were used extensively into the later periods. In Poland, a type of full-body scale armor was highly popular throughout the late 1600s and early 1700s.

Although chain mail was better than scale, scale armor still ran a very close second.

Joe Piela
Tallahassee FL

I've just finished reading the editorial from issue #164 of DRAGON Magazine. I know this is a little late, but the shop where I get my magazines at the moment gets DRAGON Magazine three to four months late. I'd like to give my comments on the topic of what character types I like, so here goes.

I'm a 17-year-old senior at Afcen International High School in the Netherlands. I'm a Canadian stationed here with my parents. Next year, I plan to go to university to study computer science. I'm not really a big guy, and most people like me, but my favorite characters are half-ogre fighters. I mean really big, mean, ugly, and usually extremely dumb brutes. I've always enjoyed the thought of stomping along through the street of some town scaring the daylight heads off a few annoying people with a big sword. It's not like I'm being mean or anything, it's just that I like my PCs to be able to do such things and not really being blamed for doing them; it's just the way half-ogres are.

Another character I like is being a ranger, be he a human, elf, or half-elf. The thought and feel of being alone and independent while not actually being so is great. The main reason that I like elves is that they are such a fair, long-lived race. Imagine all that knowledge of the world contained in one middle-aged elf; one could have lived during Shakespeare's time and told us today with first-hand experience what it was all really like. It's a fascinating concept.

I actually feel that I have two favorites: the huge, rolling idiot of destruction, the half-ogre; and the wise, independent elfen, ranger. I regret that the half-ogre was not included in the AD&D 2nd Edition game.

Beejay Johnson
Belleville, Ontario

This is an issue that has bothered me for quite some time. Many male gamers have very out-of-date attitudes toward female gamers. I'm sick and tired of the looks of horror and amazement I receive when going into the local game store, especially if I'm wearing a skirt. Various looks I've encountered seem to say, "What is she doing in here?" and "She must have the wrong shop." I admit this reaction has improved, though, as I now make a habit of going in the store more often.

Does this happen to other female gamers, or are there just a lot of male chauvinists in my area? Thankfully, enlightened males do exist. Issue number 2 of *Gamesman* (sexist title—see what I mean?) has an article in it where the GM is also referred to as "her." A miracle must have happened. Are female gamers really rare? They can't be! My gaming group of six has only one male gamer. The rest of the group (DM included) are female. Another group I know of is divided equally, male and female.

All male chauvinists reading this letter (I apologize to all enlightened males): Isn't it about time you rethought your attitudes?

[The writer asked that her name be withheld,

An irate female
England



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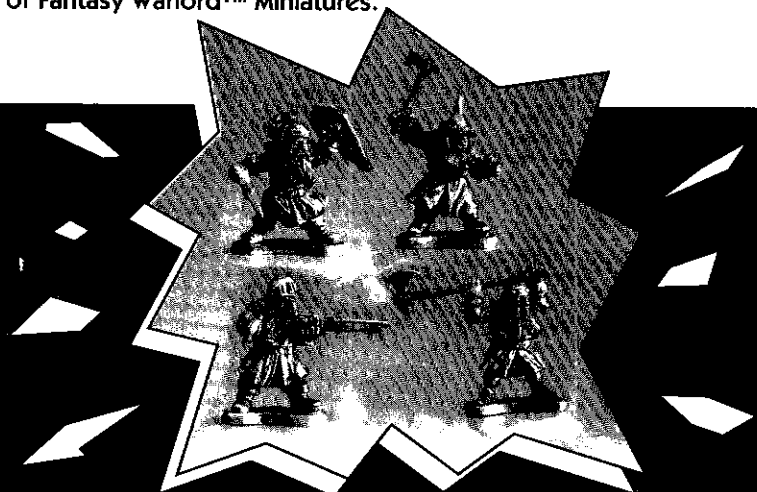
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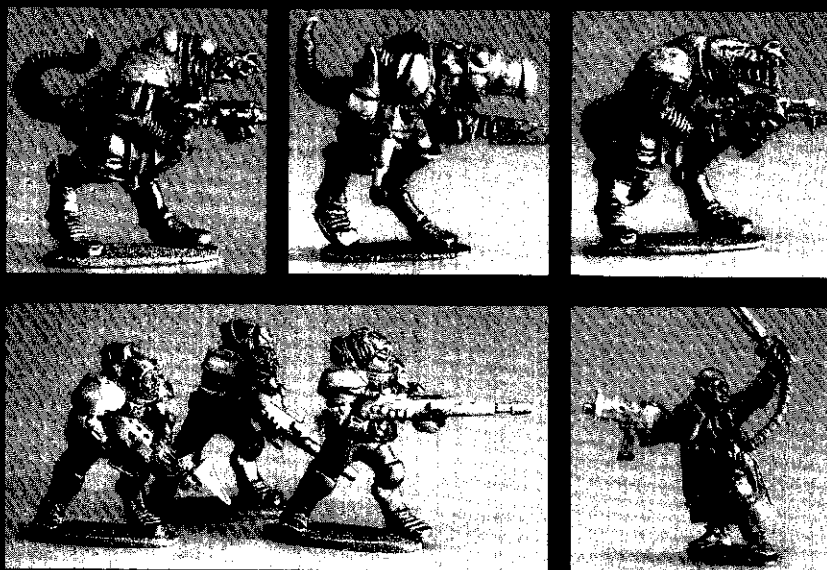
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by Scott Davis and Steven E. Schend

THE MARVEL-PHILE

Castaways II: Women, wicked and wily

I warned Dale, but he wasn't prepared. His ordeal is over now, and our kind readers have three more fantastic MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ characters to add to their games. Unfortunately, it will take Dale's nerves a few weeks to settle down after editing this month's column.

You see, the three ladies herein were quite miffed when they didn't appear in MU7 *The Gamer's Handbook of the MARVEL UNIVERSE™, 1991 Character Updates*. No one was around to warn me when they paid a visit to my office late one night. We have problems enough around here with nosy wizards smoking odious pipes, but try playing reluctant host to women wielding katanas or cybernetic claws! They expressed their disapproval over their plight, and I promised they'd be appearing in the pages of this magazine. This seemed to calm them slightly, but they vowed to check on this later. Afterward, I told Dale to watch it while he edited these entries, but he didn't believe me. It's amazing what kind of haircut you can get with foot-long, razor-sharp blades. I think the slashes and scorches in the carpet can be fixed. Some characters just don't take well to being edited!

MADAME HYDRA™

Real name unknown

F RM(30) Health: 80
A EX(20)
S GD(10) Karma: 50
E EX(20)
R GD(10) Popularity: -5
I EX(20)
P EX(20) Resources: MN(75) w/HYDRA

POWERS: None.

EQUIPMENT:

Scimitar: Madame Hydra carries a scimitar of Excellent material strength that inflicts Good (10) Edged Attacks damage.

Skysled: The skysled is a two-person vehicle capable of flying 50 miles before refuelling. The weapon systems consist of two fixed lasers mounted in the front of



the sled and a movable one on the railing. The skysled has the following statistics: Control—RM(30), Air Speed—RM(30) and Body—RM(30). The three lasers each cause Remarkable (30) damage at a range of eight areas.

Talents: Madame Hydra has an Excellent rank in marksmanship, as well as being a Weapons Specialist with a scimitar.

HISTORY: The only fact known about Madame Hydra's history is that she progressed through the ranks of HYDRA rapidly and was promoted to the position of Madame Hydra because of her fanatical devotion to HYDRA's cause. She is the sixth person to be called Madame Hydra.

One of her first major missions as Madame Hydra was to capture Nick Fury of SHIELD for the Deltites, a faction of advanced artificial lifeforms who wanted the leader of SHIELD so they could duplicate the Infinity Formula from his body (see "Marvel bulletins"). After failing in her mission to deliver Fury and discovering that the Deltites had been manipulating her, she temporarily allied herself with SHIELD. During her temporary alliance, she continually badgered and bantered with Alexander Pierce, a SHIELD agent, ultimately coming to regard him as a fellow warrior.

After defeating the Deltites on SHIELD's satellite, Madame Hydra was found to be criminally insane and was remanded to the Tyler Foundation for the Criminally Insane to undergo psychiatric treatment. Her time at the sanatorium was spent writing notes to Pierce, on whom she was fixated as her true love.

An old woman, pretending to be a nurse, teleported both herself and Madame Hydra out of the institution, to an island in the China Sea. Madame Hydra's battle prowess was immediately tested when she was attacked by a group of men. She easily defeated them, passing the test. She then reclaimed her title and status as Madame Hydra.

Meanwhile, Nick Fury and his agents were alerted to Madame Hydra's escape. They quickly tracked her general location and headed out in pursuit. Madame Hydra was in a meditative trance, awaiting the arrival of her new master, when the group arrived on the island. The SHIELD agents were ambushed and defeated by the servants of Madame Hydra's new master, the Yellow Claw. They took Alexander Pierce

and left the rest of their foes unconscious, to be conquered again in the future.

Madame Hydra brainwashed Pierce into being her consort. In a climactic battle with Fury, Pierce broke free of Madame Hydra's influence and struck her down just as she was about to kill SHIELD agent Kate Neville. Madame Hydra was captured once again, but she managed to cause a disturbance that allowed her a chance at escape. Pierce followed her, and Madame Hydra was forced to break open a capsule that exploded in a green cloud of gas. Whether she managed to pull off another escape or was killed in the explosion hasn't been determined yet—though she is currently listed as being dead. The lack of a body, however, prevents confirmation of this theory.

ROLE-PLAYING NOTES: Madame Hydra is exceedingly ruthless and revels in death and destruction. She treats other warriors with respect only after they have proven themselves in her eyes. Anyone not strong enough to fight is not worthy of her attention except perhaps to be killed.

LADY DEATHSTRIKE™

Yuriko Oyama

Cybernetically enhanced mercenary

F IN(40) Health: 100
A EX(20)
S GD(10) Karma: 46
E RM(30)
R TY(6) Popularity: - 10
I EX(20)
P EX(20) Resources: EX(20)

POWERS: Lady Deathstrike's body has been cybernetically modified in Spiral's Body Shoppes. This body has a number of cybernetic enhancements, including:

- Incredible (40) material-strength claws, capable of causing Remarkable (30) Edged Attack damage; and
- Remarkable (30) protection against physical damage and Incredible protection (40) against energy attacks.



TALENTS: Lady Deathstrike possesses the Oriental Weapons and Martial Arts A, C, and E skills.

HISTORY: Growing up as the daughter of Kenji Oyama, alias Lord Dark Wind, was not easy for the young Yuriko. Her father was a kamikaze pilot who, during World War II, survived an assault on an American battleship. He felt ashamed that he yet lived; his face was scarred during the attack, reminding him of his "failure." He scarred the faces of his children to resemble his own disfigurement.

Lord Dark Wind discovered a process by which human bone could be bonded with adamantium. He intended to create an army of super-soldiers for Japan, but his notes were stolen before accomplishing his goal, and it took years for him to recreate them.

In Lord Dark Wind's eyes, Japan had become weak in the years after the war. He brought the assassin Bullseye to Japan and repaired his damaged bones with adamantium substitutes, hoping that Bullseye would assassinate the Japanese Minister of Trade for him. However, Daredevil had followed his sworn enemy, Bullseye, to Japan to bring him to justice. Once there, Daredevil encountered Yuriko, who was intent upon exacting revenge on her father for her disfigured face and for the death of her bothers, who had died in the service of Lord Dark Wind. The young man Yuriko loved, Kira, was in the service of her father, and she didn't want him to be hurt. Yuriko led Daredevil to her father's private island, where Daredevil fought Bullseye again. The assassin eluded capture and escaped from the island. Yuriko killed her father just as he was about to kill Daredevil.

Kira, upon hearing of his lords death, committed suicide in despair. This event changed Yuriko's outlook on life, and she came to see things more as her father had. She became convinced that Wolverine had gained his own adamantium-laced bones by the process that had been stolen from her father. She donned the garb of a samurai, called herself Lady Deathstrike, and led a group of her father's warriors to regain what had been stolen from her family—namely, Wolverine's bones. Wolverine and Vindicator (Heather Hudson) fought off Lady Deathstrike and her minions. During the battle, Lady Deathstrike wielded a sword that emitted destructive energy. It was destroyed when the energy shield of Vindicator's suit caused the sword to shatter.

Later, Lady Deathstrike was transformed into a cyborg by the otherdimensional being known as Spiral. She then led Macon, Cole, and Reese—former Hellfire Club enforcers who had also been transformed into cyborgs—against Wolverine, but again Wolverine emerged victorious.

Donald Pierce, a cyborg himself, reor-

ganized the splintered group of villains called the Reavers by adding Lady Deathstrike and her cyborg cohorts; this gave him another chance to strike at Wolverine. The new group ambushed the mutant hero at the X-Men's Australian base and crucified him on two large stumps. With the aid of the youthful Jubilee, Wolverine managed to escape the cyborg group. Lady Deathstrike had the opportunity to kill Wolverine from a distance. She stayed her hand though, as she wanted to defeat him face-to-face in honorable combat.

Lady Deathstrike also participated in the Reavers' attack upon Muir Island, but they were repelled by the mutant defenders of that isle. Recently, the teleporter Gateway sent Lady Deathstrike to Wolverine's location in Canada, but some sort of energy storm threw her, Wolverine, and Puck back in time and space to Spain in 1937. Deathstrike allied herself with the Nazis to get within striking distance of Wolverine, but during her battle with him, her partners ran over her hand with a tank. At that point, the energy storm returned and swept them back to the present. Lady Deathstrike has not yet gained her "vengeance" on Wolverine.

ROLE-PLAYING NOTES: Yuriko is obsessed with getting back Wolverine's adamantium bones; this will, in her eyes, restore her family's lost honor. She will not ambush Wolverine, as she feels the adamantium must be recovered honorably for her family's honor to be restored.

SATURNYNE™

Opal Luna Saturnyne
Omniversal Majestrix

F TY(6) Health: 32
A GD(10)
S GD(10) Karma: 70
E TY(6)
R EX(20) Popularity: 0
I EX(20)
P RM(30) Resources: MN(75)

POWERS: None exhibited.

TALENTS: Monstrous rank ability in Governmental and Leadership skills.

HISTORY: Opal Luna Saturnyne holds the title of Omniversal Majestrix. This title, she claims, gives her total responsibility for the maintenance of order and reality of the multiverse that includes Marvel-Earth.

Saturnyne seems to have many counterparts in the multiverse, the most prominent being a woman, Courtney Ross, who is a vice-president of Fraser's Bank in London. She was the college girlfriend of Brian Braddock, Excalibur's Captain Britain.

Saturnyne hired the Technet to capture Phoenix, alias Rachel Summers, because Saturnyne believes that Phoenix is a threat to all reality due to her great powers.

Captain Britain, Meggan, Shadowcat, and Nightcrawler joined together to save Phoenix, then decided to stay together as a team: Excalibur.

Soon after the founding of Excalibur, Courtney Ross was attacked and overcome in her apartment by an exact double; whether this is an other-dimensional version of Saturnyne or some other being hasn't been established yet. After the transfer, Brian visited the woman he thought was Courtney and noticed a definite change of personality. This woman's true identity hasn't been revealed yet.

Later, "Ross" played a card game with her employee Nigel Frobisher at the London branch of the Hellfire Club. He lost one million pounds—which he didn't have. "Ross" has since forced Nigel into performing certain tasks for her, such as acting as her liaison between the Technet and its leader, Gatecrasher. "Ross" put an earring into Nigel's left ear, warning him never to take it out or else suffer dire consequences. Nigel bargained with Gatecrasher on behalf of "Ross" in order to rescue Brian Braddock's brother, Jamie, from his captor, Joshua N'Dingi (alias Doc Croc). Jamie was freed and brought to London.

"Ross" has also said that she is going to gain the powers of Phoenix and Shadowcat. What she exactly meant by this and how she proposes to accomplish this are still unknown.

Recently, she befriended Kitty Pryde and sponsored her education at St. Cyril's School for Young Ladies while Excalibur was still traveling between dimensions. What she intended to accomplish by this is unknown, as Kitty and Excalibur were eventually reunited successfully.

Before being reunited with Kitty Pryde, though, Excalibur caused so much disruption to the omniversal continuum with its jaunting through dimensions that Opal Luna Saturnyne had the group transmitted to the Hub, her base of operations. The Hub is a world where power abounds and people possessing superpowers are commonplace. Saturnyne had placed a bounty on Phoenix's head, as she considered the Phoenix entity a threat to reality. Excalibur escaped the Hub after fighting many superpowered foes and by disguising Phoenix as Kitty Pryde. Saturnyne actually aided them along the way, giving

Continued on page 95



T.M.

Defenders of the Hearth

Halflings and their specialty priests

by Chris Perry

So many stereotypes have been applied to halflings that it is no wonder so few people take them seriously. They are seen as naive and rural, yet many people clutch their moneybags when they see a halfling coming, for halfling thieves are said to be so sly and dexterous that one can steal the gold from your pockets (and the fillings from your teeth) in broad daylight. Little has been said about halfling priests, however. This article details the specialty priests of that people.

Specialty priests are an elite order within a priesthood, usually in the minority but wielding powers that normal clerics lack. Since most halfling priests cannot be multiclassed, the specialty priests found here are well balanced. Few halfling priests will ever reach 9th level, and only the wisest and luckiest achieve 12th level.

Halfling specialty priests worship the halfling gods found in AD&D 1st Edition game books *Legends & Lore* and *Unearthed Arcana*. Plenty of room is left here for the DM's creativity, so change what you don't like and keep the rest. New spheres of influence from *The Tome of Magic* have been added as well.



Arvoreen the Defender

Intermediate power of the Seven Heavens, LG

Symbol: Sword with shield

Portfolio: Defense, warriors (halflings)

Worshippers' alignment: All good and neutral (halflings)

Priests' alignment: LG

Requirements: Strength 12, wisdom 12

Weapons allowed: Any

Armor allowed: Any

Major spheres: All, Combat, Divination, Guardian, Healing, Law, Protection, War, Wards

Minor spheres: Animal, Necromantic, Sun

Magical items allowed: Same as cleric, plus all weapons and armor

Granted powers

1. A specialty priest of Arvoreen may turn undead as a normal cleric.
2. A specialty priest of Arvoreen is treated as a fighter of equal level when attempting to parry (see the *PHB*, page 100, for details on parrying). If the parrying optional rule is not used, the DM may give an armed priest's opponents a -1 penalty on attack rolls when using hand-held weapons against him.
3. At 5th level, a specialty priest of Arvoreen can invoke courage in himself and up to six others, granting those affected immunity to fear and a +1 bonus to attack

Artwork by Jim Holloway

rolls and saving throws. The effects last for one turn, and this may be invoked once per day.

Restrictions/Taboos: None

Notes

Arvoreen is worshiped whenever war is expected, usually on the eve of a battle. Services can be held anywhere, though clerics prefer to perform them within a temple's confines. Temples of Arvoreen are circular in shape, with the altar (a raised platform with an engraved, silvered shield on it) in the center. Weapons (preferably those of former enemies) are treated with silver and placed upon the shield; a thick oil is then applied to the weapons, and all are set ablaze. Due to the oil's special mixture of chemicals, the weapons quickly heat up, causing them to shatter. The altar glows dim red, then bright yellow, then blinding white as the weapons are consumed by divine fire. The priests wear silvered helms and chain mail during the ceremony, silently holding hands around the blazing altar and focusing all of their thoughts on Arvoreen and their plight. When the flames die down, the priests leave, touching the altar with their weapons as they go by. The high priest leaves last, gathering the fragments of the sacrificed weapons so that new weapons can be made from them later. Services on the field of battle are less formal.

Priests of Arvoreen are concerned with the defensibility of halfling communities and help patrol the surrounding lands. Their temples are full of cunningly laid traps. One of their favorites is known as the "knee slasher," which consists of two blades placed opposite each other in a doorway or corridor. Each is built into the walls and carefully disguised (-20% on thieves' attempts to find traps). They are triggered when anyone over 100 lbs. walks on the trigger plate within the floor. The blades have a THACO of 9 and cause 1d6 +2 hp damage each. If one blade hits, the victim's movement rate is reduced by half until the damage is healed. If both blades hit, the victim's movement is limited to 3 until the damage is healed. The trigger plate can easily be avoided by those aware of the trap, and the blades are placed about 42" above the ground. Thus, a halfling can safely run past the trap without setting it off, while larger beings are seldom so lucky.

Specialty priests comprise 35% of Arvoreen's clergy, getting along well with both the regular clergy and the community. Dogs and wolves are often trained by Arvoreen's priests, and they usually have 3d4 of these animals around at any one time, each animal knowing 1d4 +1 tricks.



Brandobaris, Master of stealth

Demipower of the Prime Material Plane, N
Symbol: A halfling's foot

Portfolio: Thieves, adventurers

Worshippers' alignment: Any nonlawful and nonevil (halflings)

Priests' alignment: N

Requirements: Dexterity 16, wisdom 13

Weapons allowed: As per thief

Armor allowed: Leather armor, no shield

Major spheres: All, Charm, Chaos, Creation, Divination, Healing, Protection, Sun, Travelers

Minor spheres: Guardian, Time

Magical items allowed: Same as clerics and thieves

Granted powers

1. A specialty priest of Brandobaris is a multiclassed cleric/thief, with full powers and abilities except as noted later.

2. A specialty priest of Brandobaris may *haste* himself once per day. The spell lasts for five rounds, plus one round per level over the 6th level of experience. Luckily, the priest does not magically age every time he uses it.

3. At 3rd level, a specialty priest of Brandobaris may cast a *blur* spell once per day (as per the wizard spell).

4. At 6th level, a specialty priest of Brandobaris may cast a *fumble* spell once per

day (as per the wizard spell).

5. Brandobaris tends to favor his more adventurous followers, and the most daring ones may gain a special reward from him. Those who pull off a very dangerous and rewarding venture may be granted an additional experience level, should Brandobaris be impressed (1% chance, possibly higher if the DM warrants it). Only a halfling of 10th level or lower can be given this boon, which can be gained only once in that particular halfling's lifetime.

6. Brandobaris constantly wanders the Prime Material Plane and occasionally enlists the aid of his talented followers. There is a 1% chance per level over the 10th that a halfling thief will be visited by Brandobaris, who will appear as an ordinary halfling rogue. Other thieves may join in on the adventure, but nonhalflings may find some of their possessions missing afterward. The reward equals the danger, both of which are great. This will happen only once in that halfling's lifetime.

Restrictions/Taboos

1. Specialty priests of Brandobaris cannot turn the undead.

2. These specialty priests are limited to 12th level as thieves, regardless of how dexterous they are.

3. Specialty priests of Brandobaris do not gain the ability to use scrolls that other thieves get when they reach 10th level. They can still cast clerical spells from scrolls, though.

Notes

Priests of Brandobaris hold ceremonies for him on nights of the full moon. Temples that venerate him differ greatly from one another and, depending on the tolerance of the local residents, are often hidden. Services are informal, consisting of the sacrifice of stolen goods or treasures found while adventuring.

Priests of Brandobaris wear leather armor of all styles and colors, though they prefer blacks and browns due to their camouflage effects. Custom-made armor with hidden pockets and the like command top prices from the priests. It should be mentioned that practically anything that can normally be bought from the thieves' guild can be bought from these clerics. (Even poisons can be provided if the right poisons are sought and you talk to the right priests, and the DM allows it.)

Brandobaris' priests are expected to go adventuring at least twice a year, barring sickness or imprisonment. Specialty priests make up 30% of Brandobaris' clergy, though recently more halflings entering this clergy are choosing to be specialty priests rather than simple clerics.



Cyrrollalee the Faithful

Lesser power of the Seven Heavens, LG

Symbol: An open door

Portfolio: Friendship, trust

Worshippers' alignment: Any good

Priests' alignment: LG

Requirements: Wisdom 12, charisma 13

Weapons allowed: All bludgeoning weapons

Armor allowed: Chain mail and shield, maximum

Major spheres: All, Charm, Creation, Divination, Guardian, Healing, Law, Protection, Wards

Minor spheres: Summoning, Sun

Magical items allowed: Same as clerics

Granted powers

1. A specialty priest of Cyrrollalee may turn the undead.

2. A specialty priest of Cyrrollalee is immune to all enchantment/charm spells of 3rd level or lower. In addition, she is immune to *mass charm* and *mass suggestion* spells.

3. A specialty priest of Cyrrollalee may use a *soothing word* once per day for every four experience levels. This can be used to remove fear from one person, or it can be used to calm down a group of characters (equal to twice the priest's experience level in hit dice); its range is 30'. Thus, a 5th-level priest could calm

down ten 1st-level characters, two other 5th-level characters, or any combination thereof. The priest can then talk to them, influencing their reaction favorably by one category on the encounter reaction table (page 103 of the *DMG*).

4. At 5th level, a specialty priest of Cyrrollalee may cast a prayer spell once per day in addition to all other spells and powers she has.

5. At 11th level, a specialty priest of Cyrrollalee may cast a *symbol of persuasion* once per week.

6. If a follower of Cyrrollalee is in grave danger within her own home, there is a small chance (5%) that the goddess will help by animating a small piece of furniture (five cubic feet maximum; AC 6; HD 2; THACO 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6), that will then attack the enemies for five rounds. That halfling must then do a service for Cyrrollalee, who will indicate in a dream what she wants done. The task varies, but it shouldn't be too difficult to accomplish.

Restrictions/Taboos

1. All priests of Cyrrollalee are expected to turn over 10% of their wealth to the church. Any useful magical or nonmagical items may be sold to the church for 60% of its market value (it is considered used goods, after all).

2. Priests of Cyrrollalee are expected to keep their word. If a person gives a priest a secret with the understanding that it must not be revealed, the priest must keep it. She is free to reveal a secret if keeping it would result in harm or anguish to another creature, however.

Notes

Cyrrollalee is worshiped on the first day of each month. It is interesting to note that, like Yondalla, she is worshiped in the home. Cyrrollalee protects halflings inside their homes and strives to keep them in good spirits. On the day of her worship, all the followers converge upon the temple to say a short prayer of thanks. Thereafter, the priests go around blessing every house and burrow-hole in the community and renewing the spells of warding that some people pay to have cast. The ceremonies end in the evening, when the halflings are safe in their homes and the last prayers are said.

Priests of Cyrrollalee wear plain brown robes to symbolize their simple nature and to keep greedy thieves away. While it is not a sin to have wealth, priests of Cyrrollalee find it prudent to show it only sparingly. Among the younger priests, though, there is a growing trend toward wearing more colorful and expensive clothing.

"Flaunting" would be too strong a word, but as one young priest said, "We are tired of wearing sack-cloth! Let's get some color in here!" Their elders are not amused, but they are tolerant of these individuals and continue to wear the older, simpler styles.

Most of Cyrrollalee's followers are normal halflings, though some warriors pray for her protection as well. Specialty clerics account for 30% of all priests. Relations are between clerics and the specialty priests are excellent.



Sheela Peryroyl the Wise

Intermediate power of Concordant Opposition, N

Symbol: A daisy

Portfolio: Agriculture, nature, weather

Worshippers' alignment: Any

Priests' alignment: N

Requirements: Constitution 12, wisdom 13

Weapons allowed: Club, dagger, dart, flails (all), knife, sling

Armor allowed: Leather or studded leather, no shield

Magical items allowed: As cleric and druid

Granted powers

1. A specialty priest of Sheela may identify any plant or animal.

2. A specialty priest of Sheela may *speak with plants* at will.

3. At 5th level, a specialty priest of Sheela may cast a *hold plants* spell once per day, in addition to other spells she has.

4. At 7th level, a specialty priest of Sheela may cast a *charm plants* spell (as per the wizard spell) once per week, in addition to all other spells she has.

5. At 11th level, a specialty priest of Sheela may cast a *sunray* spell once per month, in addition to all other spells she has. The strain of casting this spell is so great that the priest must make a constitution check (at -2) or lose 2d4 hp. If the loss is greater than the priest's current hit points, she falls unconscious and risks death, as per the normal game rules.

Restrictions/Taboos

1. Specialty priests of Sheela cannot turn or command undead.

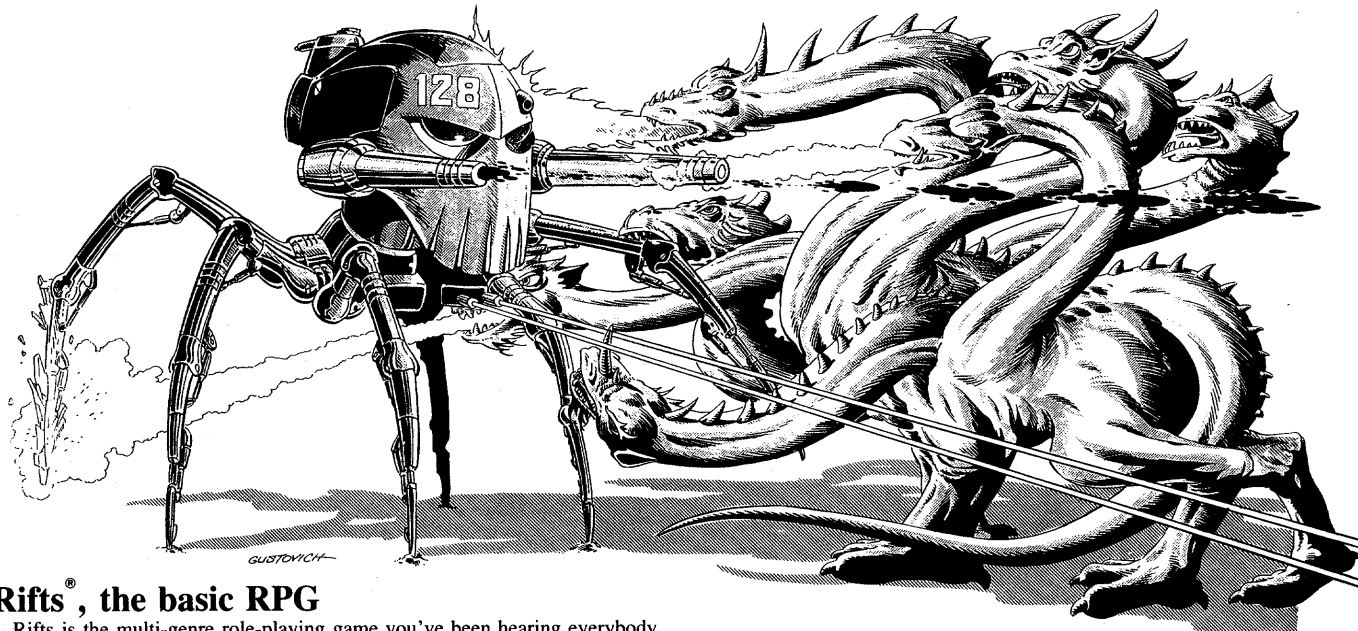
2. At the start of her career, a specialty priest of Sheela must spend three of her nonweapon proficiencies on weather sense and herbalism. She may choose to spend the other proficiencies as she pleases.

Notes

Priests of Sheela are more colorful than most halfling priests, wearing flowers in their hair and robes of bright green, with elements of other colors of the rainbow. They gather at both cultivated and untitled fields on nights of the full moon to worship their goddess. There they throw seeds into the wind, watching them scatter and divining portents as a result. Special festivals are held in Sheela's honor every spring and fall, during the time crops are planted or harvested. The community celebrates and joins in the party, which ends the day before Yondalla's holy day.

Temples dedicated to Sheela are like huge farms or gardens, for surrounding such places are vast fields of wild flowers (daisies can be found everywhere). In the spring and summer, great swarms of butterflies cross the skies, feeding on the nectar of flowers. The temples themselves are square, each with an inner courtyard set aside for an indoor garden where the priests grow plants during winter. These priests have just recently learned how to crossbreed certain trees and plants, and they have bred some very strange fruit trees.

Specialty priests of Sheela make up 15% of Sheela's priests. 80% of them are druids, and 5% of them are regular clerics. Druids command the church, but the clerics perform many valuable missions in Sheela's honor.



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- Written by Kevin Siembieda, art by Kevin Long.
- 112 pages, \$11.95 plus \$1.50 for postage and handling.

Rifts World Books Two: Atlantis: Atlantis is the domain of the multi-dimensional slavers known as the Splugorth and the Minions of Splugorth. It is a domain where all manner of supernatural and other-dimensional life forms come to visit, live, or to purchase slaves and magic. It is a dangerous and mystical place. Will include dimensional travel and many surprises. Written by Kevin Siembieda, illustrated by Kevin Long. Available March 1992.



Urogalan the Shaper

Lesser power of Concordant Opposition, N (good tendencies)

Symbol: A hand holding a rock

Portfolio: Earth, earthen craftsmanship

Worshippers' alignment: Any

Priests' alignment: N, NG

Requirements: Wisdom 13

Weapons allowed: Club, dagger, hand axe, footman's mace, short sword, sling, warhammer

Armor allowed: Any

Major spheres: All, Combat, Divination, Elemental (earth/fire), Healing, Protection, 'Ravelers, Wards

Minor spheres: Creation, Guardian, Sun

Magical items allowed: Same as clerics

Granted powers

1. A specialty priest of Urogalan is astute at detecting the magical properties of an item. By holding an item for one round, he can tell how many "to-hit" bonuses it has, if it's cursed, or if it has any powers that are earth-related (a yes-no answer). It takes three rounds to check for all of the above. He cannot tell how many charges are in a charged item, however, and a cursed item might be activated by the priest in the process of picking it up.

2. A specialty priest of Urogalan gains a +1 bonus when using any of the following nonweapon proficiencies: armorer, blacksmithing, brewing, leather-working, pot-

tery, and weaponsmithing.

3. At 6th level, a specialty priest of Urogalan gains immunity to all petrification attacks.

4. At 10th level, a specialty priest of Urogalan may cast a stone to *flesh* spell once per week.

Restrictions/Taboos

Specialty priests of Urogalan cannot turn the undead.

Notes

According to halfling lore, Urogalan is the one who keeps the ground from shaking and helps bring spring to the land. He is also a skilled artisan, giving his inspiration and knowledge to those dedicated to their craft. He is prayed to whenever a halfling seeks insight about the earth, the underground, and the causes of a late spring. Priests of Urogalan are talented craftsmen, teaching others their skills when possible. While they get most of their materials from the dwarves, sometimes they must go out and seek their own sources of metal, which often brings them into conflict with Underdark dwellers like derro and duergar. As a result, they have the same hatred that surface dwarves have for these "dark dwarves."

Urogalan is worshiped mainly by halfling miners and earthworkers, though he is venerated to some extent by halfling craftsmen of other kinds. Temples dedicated to him are set in natural caves, with rooms carved from the rock around it. The caves are shallow, rarely reaching 80' or so underground. Priests of Urogalan wear clothing of red, dull orange, or brown. His symbol is carried on each priest in the form of a brass pin. Holy days occur during the winter solstice and spring equinox, when hand-crafted items are sacrificed to him by burial.

Urogalan's priesthood is small in number. Specialty priests make up 20% of the total of Urogalan's priests.



Yondalla the Provider

Greater power of the Seven Heavens, LG

Symbol: A shield

Portfolio: Halfling life, fertility, protection, death

Worshippers' alignment: Any good or neutral

Priests' alignment: LG

Requirements: Wisdom 13

Weapons allowed: Same as cleric

Armor allowed: Any

Major spheres: All, Astral, Creation, Divination, Guardian, Healing, Law, Necromantic, Protection, Summoning, Wards

Minor spheres: Combat, Sun

Magical items allowed: Same as cleric

Granted powers

1. A specialty priest of Yondalla may turn undead.

2. At 3rd level, a specialty priest of Yondalla gains immunity to paralyzing attacks and fear.

3. At 6th level, a specialty priest of Yondalla can absorb (as a *rod of absorption*) any one spell of third level or lower directed specifically at her. If the spell has a wide area of effect, the spell cannot be absorbed. The priest can activate this power only once per day in anticipation of magical attack and hold it ready for one turn; during this time, she cannot cast any spells. Once a spell is absorbed, the priest can use the energy to cast extra spells of

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her own within 24 hours of its absorption, on a level-for-level basis (e.g., an absorbed second-level spell would allow the priest to cast two first-level spells or one second-level spell of her own). After 24 hours, the spell energy is lost.

Restrictions/Taboos

1. All priests of Yondalla must give 10% of their monetary wealth to the church, which is used to maintain the church and help the community.

2. Priests of Yondalla often serve as judges when crimes are committed, and they also arbitrate disputes between opposing groups. They must be fair in their assessment of the situation at hand, and cannot be biased or take bribes.

Notes

Yondalla is worshiped by most halflings, who set aside the fifth day of each week for her worship. This is called Safeday, and the daylight hours are spent relaxing and enjoying oneself. At night, when the last meal is served, food and drink are set aside for Yondalla in remembrance of what she has done for them. Yondalla's priests are not idle during this time, for they visit the people, making sure that their needs are taken care of. Priests also serve as judges, arbitrators, and representatives of the local community in regional discussions with other leaders. Since Yondalla presides over the lives of halflings, her priests perform the necessary rituals during funerals and help pregnant women in childbirth.

Yondalla's priests wear clothing made of bright yellow or pastel green. They find cloaks of orange-yellow attractive, and each wears a miniature painted shield made of pewter on her armor and cloak; the shield shows her rank. Yellow shields are worn by low-level priests, orange shields are worn by lesser leaders of the church, while checkered orange-and-yellow shields are worn by the high priests. Adventuring priests not tied to a specific temple wear shields of green, while adventurers tied to a temple wear checkered shields of yellow and green.

Specialty priests comprise 40% of Yondalla's clergy. As is common with fundamentally good beings worshipping a fundamentally good deity, relations between the clerics and specialty priests are exemplary.

Ω

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- Depending on who's telling it, the D&D® game was first published in November 1973 or January 1974, so I'll accept either year. (5 points)
- You can't be a circus clown in the CHILL* game. In view of the other exciting character options available to a SAVE investigator, how this obvious and useful character class was overlooked is beyond me; clearly, it was an editorial oversight. (4 points)
- The MONSTERS! MONSTERS!* game, by Ken St. Andre, is a game in which the player characters are monsters who are out to get all those nosy, pious adventurers. It is based on Ken's TUNNELS & TROLLS* rules. (4 points)
- A—a; B—g; C—b; D—h; E—c; F—d; G—e; H—f. (1 point per correct answer)
- The system with proctology is THE EXPENDABLES* game, a pretty decent SF space-adventure system that is not otherwise hilarious. (4 points)
- Only the WARHAMMER FANTASY ROLEPLAY* game is bereft of a Vikings supplement. (4 points)
- This could only be the WOOF MEOW* game, in which you can role-play a domestic house pet. As it says on the back cover: "Cats and Dogs . . . As You've Never Seen Them!" (4 points)
- A—b; B—e; C—c; D—a; E—f; F—h; G—d; H—g. (1 point for each correct answer)
- The Argent Wombat is the only monster described in the ROLEPLAYER* game. Why would you need any others? (4 points)
- The nine color clearance levels, in order, are infrared, red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet, and ultraviolet. If you are not cleared for this information, please report for termination immediately. Thank you for your cooperation. (4 points)
- In a PHOENIX COMMAND* game melee, you can't do better than to wield a chair—two-handed, of course. (4 points)
- A—c; B—h; C—d; D—b; E—g; F—f; G—a; H—e. (1 point for each correct answer)
- MECHA DOGS is the fictional entry. The REALM OF YOLMI* game is an SF space-adventure game; THE CRETAN CHRONICLES* game is a British game-book series; the UUHRAAH!* game is a caveman system; the MUTAZOIDS* game is science fantasy; and the FRINGEWORTHY* game is an SF post-holocaust system. Honest! (4 points)
- A—e; B—c; C—a; D—b; E—d. (2 points for each correct answer)
- I bet you thought Studying was the bogus one, didn't you? Actually, there is no Psychic Awareness in the ALMA MATER* game. (4 points)
- Published in 1978, the first AD&D® module was G1 *Steading of the Hill Giant Chief*, by Gary Gygax. (4 points)
- In the CYBORG COMMANDO* game, when you roll two 10-sided dice, you multiply one die by the other. This

seems needlessly eccentric, but, as the rules explain, most people can multiply two single-digit numbers easily and often with less trouble than adding two-digit numbers. Try not to think about it. (4 points)

- A—e; B—c; C—d; D—a; E—b. (1 point for each correct answer)
- The GAMMA WORLD game has never won a Best Role-Playing Rules award at the ORIGINS* convention. (4 points)
- Only the SPAWN OF FASHAN* game, possibly the most unintentionally silly RPG ever published, could present a feature like the Body Roll Charts with a straight face. (4 points)

Scoring

0-20 points: Don't you play anything but the AD&D game?

21-35 points: Not bad; you know a thing or two about role-playing games.

36-50 points: You are obviously an experienced hand and know your way around the RPG field.

51-75 points: You are an expert, qualified to answer RPG questions of any sort.

76-100 points: You're a big cheater, and if you ever play in my game I'm going to watch every dice roll.

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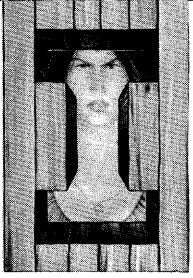
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break-through \brāk-'thrū n (1918) 1 : an act or instance of breaking through an obstruction 2 : an offensive thrust that penetrates and carries beyond a defensive line in warfare 3 : a sudden advance esp. in knowledge or technique

Summer, 1992
Gaming will *never* be the same.







do not make the rules of Magik Natureel. I do but abide by them.

The folk of our small village by the sea have never fully understood. They think I raise the storms I warn them of, fear I cause the shipwrecks I foretell. Still, they come to me, for I do

know the spells and magiks within human power.

And I know the payment for them, who better? I pay for my powers every day of my life, with solitude and loneliness and occasional persecution when a scapegoat is in order.

So when Piers Grandman caught a mermaid in his net, where would he come but to me?

"Throw her back," I told him, standing in the hold of his wee boat, convinced at last that he had told me the truth. I cannot see my own fortune, you understand, a blindness of all those with the power. So when blond, bronzed Piers came to me that night with a tale of a mermaid tangled in his net—

We were of an age, Piers and I. I loved Piers when we were both wee childer in the schoolroom. He protected me from the taunts of the others when my newly awakened powers made mischief—but naught came of it.

We grew up, I took my inevitable place as wise woman, and Piers had no dearth of young women eager to capture him—until all three of his boats went down in a storm. Two good men drowned, and Piers lost everything but his life. It took him five years of hard labor on other men's boats to buy the tiny craft he now sailed out every morning and home every night . . . alone.

Perhaps it was the way all the young women who had so eagerly pursued him turned away when he was penniless that soured him. Whatever the reason, now that he was on his way back up on fortune's wheel, those who tried to catch his eye flirted in vain. He kept to himself, working all day, taking a solitary tankard of ale in the tavern in the evening, and then retiring to his boat.

I often thought about him, all alone in the night, for although his hard life had made him old beyond his years, he was still a fine figure of a man and everything I had ever desired.

So when he lured me on board his boat in the darkness, my heart beat apace and I climbed eagerly down the ladder. Piers turned up the flame in the lantern—and I saw her.

She was a mermaid, no doubt of it, although for a moment I doubted she was alive. Then the fishy tail twitched, and she raised a hand to cover her eyes against the light, baring one breast from the concealment of her long dark-gold hair. There was also no doubt that, from the waist up, she was a perfectly formed, beautiful woman.

Her breathing was labored. Her lips were bluish green, a certain sign that a normal human being was gravely ill, perhaps dying—but what did I know of a normal mermaid?

"You must put her back into the sea," I told Piers. "She cannot live on land. Listen to her breathing. She is drowning in the air as surely as a man who follows her into her element drowns in the sea."

"Help her," Piers insisted.

At his voice, the mermaid took her hand away from

Human Voices

by Jean Lorrah

Illustrations by Martin Cannon

over her huge sea-green eyes and reached out to Piers, making plaintive little noises.

"She's begging you," I said, tears burning my throat. "You can't keep her, Piers!"

"You know medicines!" he insisted. "Give her something. She must live!" He grasped the hand the mermaid held out to him, and I saw the look that passed between them. I suddenly pictured this creature watching Piers day after day, fearful yet attracted, until one day she found the courage to approach his net.

Mermaids do not become entangled in fishermen's nets, certainly not in calm seas. Nor do men survive shipwreck in our fearful spring storms. I remembered Piers, washed up on the rocks, unconscious. Accidentally washed up? Or carried there by some shy sea creature who had pined ever since for his strength and beauty? Ah, Piers. Little notion you had what nets you cast for female hearts!

I told myself it was pity for the poor suffering creature that set me searching through my grimoires, but in truth it was that I could deny Piers nothing. Most of what I found merely defined mermaids or warned of how their beauty lured sailors into the sea to drown. Finally, though, one dusty old tome provided the information I sought: the formula to turn a mermaid into a human woman.

It was hard reading, written in a crabbed hand in some archaic dialect. I had to guess at translating some of it. The ingredients for the potion were plain enough—I knew all the old names for herbs and simples—but the instructions for treating them were in metaphors strange to me. "Swing beneath the milk pails" I took to mean when the Big and Little Dippers were in view, and "Flavor with a drop of home" I decided had to mean a drop of sea water.

But what of "Mate with a maiden" or "Grind when the dog chases his tail"? I was sure that last was a reference to the weather or to some astronomical configuration, but then on my way home from gathering herbs in the hills I saw an actual puppy chasing his tail, and dashed home to grind the numage.

It took the better part of three days to perform every step at its appointed hour, but at last I had distilled a tiny vial of clear green potion. I read through the formula one last time, making certain I had done everything to my honest best. How one mated a potion with a maiden I still did not know; I decided the mermaid must be meant, if not my own maidenhood which was, alas, intact. The translation of the last sentence also eluded me, but finally I thought I made it out: "The transformation will be short-lived."

So—all my work and all the mermaid's suffering would gain her . . . what? A few hours? A few days, perhaps, to walk upon the legs of a human woman before she returned to her natural form and the sea reclaimed her? She might have Piers for a short time, but afterwards?

The mermaid had broken through the barriers he had erected against love. When she was gone he would be lonely . . . and I would be understanding.

I returned to the quay with the vial of potion at dawn of a bright day. The other fishing boats were preparing to set sail, one or two already bobbing on the horizon. I threaded my way carefully along the narrow planks until one of the men, Captain Lindstrom, blocked my way.

"Whur ye goin' lass?"

"Never you mind," I told him. "It's nowt to do wi' you."

"When the witch-woman goes to Grandman's boat, it's to do wi' all of us. Three days he's sat in harbor, never stirring. What's he got in his hold, lass?"

"Nothing for you to stir yourselves about."

"'Tis some creature of the devil, some sea-monster!" put in old Captain Torritty. "I seen it. I seen Grandman pull summat up in his net three days since—summat no God-fearing man would have truck with!"

"Aye!" said Lindstrom. "Summat he's kep' in the hold of his boat, pouring buckets of sea water on it and threatening any who came near. You know what 'tis, lass. You tell us."

"Aye, tell us afore Grandman curses the whole fleet!" added Torritty.

That brought mutters from the other men, but I clutched the potion safe in my pocket and stood my ground, staying safely clear of the edge of the walkway. "I'll do better than tell you!" I said defiantly, staking the mermaid's life, and perhaps my own, that I had done the potion right. "If you're curious enough to delay sailing for a few minutes more, I'll show you why Piers Grandman has spent the last three days aboard his boat—and you'll laugh at yourselves and envy him!"

With that I pushed past them and boarded Piers's boat. He stood in the hatchway, glaring at the men behind me as if daring them to step on board. None dared.

"Have ye got it, lass?" he asked eagerly as he shut the hatch door behind us.

"Aye, and I hope for all our sakes it works!"

I bent over the mermaid, who by this time was much the worse for her time out of her native element. Her eyes stared at me dully, like the eyes of a dead fish, accusing. Her hair was brittle and lifeless, like dried-out vegetation blown along the shore.

I pulled the vial from my pocket, lifted my skirt to point to my feet, then pantomimed drinking down the liquid. She apparently understood, for her eyes came to life. She reached eagerly for the vial and poured the contents down her throat without pausing for breath.

The transformation began at once, her pallor receding into normal human rosiness, her hair resuming its silkiness, her lips turning from waxen pale to the greenish cast they had had when I first saw her, and then ruddy.

Then she began to thrash, her great tail heaving as she moaned and squealed.

Footsteps sounded on the deck above us. Someone pounded on the door. "What have you got down there?"

The mermaid sobbed and screamed, sounding like a human woman in childbirth travail. Piers climbed the ladder to face the men on deck, and though my curiosity yearned to watch the final transformation, my concern for Piers made me follow him, as if I could protect him.

Blinking in the sunlight, the mermaid's cries wafting from the hatch behind us, we faced the angry sailors. "Show us, Piers Grandman! Let us kill the devil's spawn ye've brought among us!"

"'Tis no devil's spawn," Piers replied. "You'll see soon enough what beauty I've found. No wicked thing could be

so beautiful! "

"Beautiful to your evil mind!" said Captain Torrity. "Mayhap it takes ye over. We mus'na gaze upon such evil!"

"Aye!" came the shouts from the others. "Destroy the devil-creature! "

Someone picked up a lantern, unlit, and smashed it on the deck, splashing oil across the planks of the boat Piers had worked so long and hard for.

"Burn the demon out!" cried Torrity, although he had no fire.

"No!" Piers cried, leaping for Torrity's throat. The other men immediately dragged him off the old man and held him, struggling and shouting, as Captain Lindstrom picked up a piece of sailcloth, dipped it in the oil, and attempted to strike a light to it.

The other men fell silent, only Piers struggling and raving as they threatened to destroy the boat that had become his life and the life within her that had become his obsession. I muttered an invocation to the winds, and a fresh breeze kept the sparks from landing on the oil-soaked cloth, but I could do no more than delay for brief moments.

The boat rocked in the wavelets the breeze produced. I heard the hatch door open behind me. Then the men froze as one, staring beyond me to the hatchway.

I turned. The mermaid stood framed in the hatchway . . . mermaid no longer. She was a woman, surely the most beautiful ever to walk upon two perfectly shaped legs. In naked, unashamed glory she pulled herself up the ladder by the rope handles to stand on uncertain feet in the sunshine, displaying all the greatest beauties of earth and sea.

Her hair glowed with sunlight, but her eyes were the sea incarnate. They sparkled when she saw Piers, and her soft red mouth smiled to reveal the only teeth I have ever seen that truly did seem pearls. She held out her arms and tottered toward him stiff legged, like a toddler child, and such was her perfection that her gait seemed no flaw but the mark of her newness, her innocence.

My heart ached in my throat, not with jealousy but with the ancient knowledge that nothing so perfect is ever allotted more than one moment of splendor. The men fell back before the impact of her unblemished grace, leaving Piers free, holding out his hands to her, tears rolling down his lined face as pure joy lighted his eyes.

If only for one moment, I had made him happy.

She placed her hands in his, and it was as if a spell were broken. "Whore!" roared Captain Torrity, unable to comprehend naked innocence.

"Seize the slut!" cried Captain Lindstrom. "Brazen, disgusting, naked —"

As the sailors moved threateningly toward her, the mermaid turned from Piers, her eyes wide with terror. He tried to put a protective arm about her shoulders but, slippery as a fish, she eluded his grasp and dived over the railing into the safety of her native element.

Piers was one step behind her, halting at the rail to see the tips of her pink toes disappear beneath the foam. "Gone!" he cried in agony. Turning to the sailors, he shouted, "You've driven away the only love I've ever

known!"

"Lad, she was an evil thing, the Whore of Babylon," said Captain Torrity.

"No!" said Piers. "She was —"

His words were interrupted by a splashing in the water beside the boat, a scream, followed by choking sounds. We all turned to look and saw the mermaid thrashing in the water, her lovely hair tangled over her face, her arms waving wildly.

Piers must have known instantly what had happened, for he threw off his jacket and shoes and leaped into the water, swimming strongly to the terrified woman. She threw her arms about his neck, and they both sank under the water.

Only then did I know what I had done.

"Help them!" I cried. "She'll drown him!"

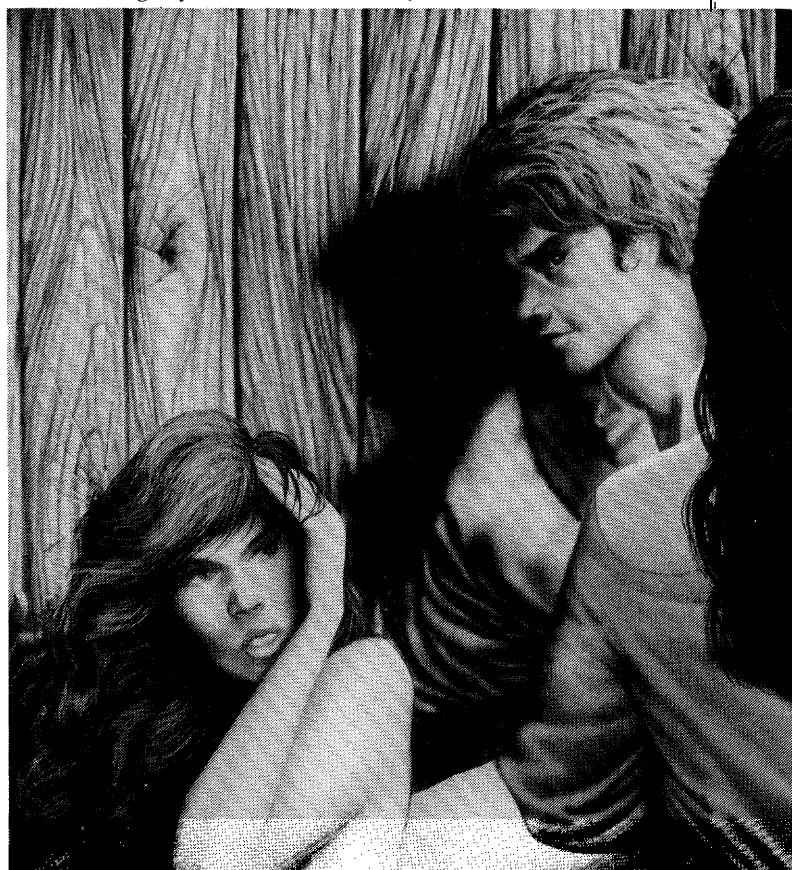
But no man on the deck would move to save Piers, who had chosen the woman they despised. And I? I am a witch-woman. I cannot go into the sea. It would reject me, and then these men would take me up and burn me, and the fire would take me gladly.

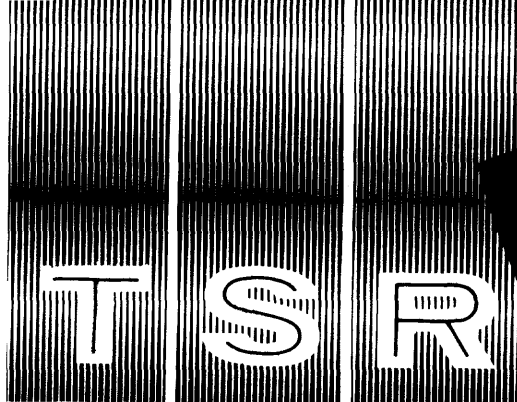
So I stood at the rail of Piers's boat, watching the water. The waves lifted and fell smoothly. There was no sign of life.

The bodies washed ashore the next day, twined together like lovers. Another sailor drowned for the love of a mermaid . . . but this time not alone.

For in making her able to live on land, I had rendered the mermaid incapable of living in the sea. She, too, had drowned.

I am an old woman now, with my memories and my knowledge of the unalterable rules of Magik Natureel. The young come to me for love spells, and I warn them: Do not love out of your element. You may have a single moment of glory . . . but is it worth your life? Ω





Previews....

NEW PRODUCTS FOR JANUARY 1992

DS1 *Freedom*

AD&D® game DARK SUN™ module
by David "Zeb" Cook

This, the first adventure set in the new DARK SUN™ campaign setting, is presented in the versatile two flip-book format first used in the DARK SUN™ boxed set. These books are twice as big and come with full-color art, packaged in a folder that doubles as a DM's screen unique to the adventures. This package also includes a short story found nowhere else.

Suggested Retail Price: \$12.95/£7.99
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RR3 *Van Richten's Guide to Vampires*

AD&D® game RAVENLOFT™ accessory
by Nigel Findley

Within this 96-page accessory for the RAVENLOFT™ Gothic horror setting, Dr. Rudolph Van Richten, one of Ravenloft's foremost lore masters and vampire hunters, shares his vast knowledge from decades of research and experience with these "kings of the undead." Dr. Van Richten details vampiric powers, weaknesses, and feeding and sleeping habits, as well as their varied relationships with others of their kind. Old myths are dispelled, new facts are discovered, and the experiences of both vampires and those who hunt them are recorded for your safety and enlightenment.

Suggested Retail Price: \$10.95/£6.99
Product No.: 9345

MC11 *Monstrous Compendium,* **FORGOTTEN REALMS® Appendix**

AD&D® 2nd Edition accessory
by Lots o'TSR Folks

This, the second *Monstrous Compendium* Appendix for the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting, includes all the latest monstrosities from the manic minds of many of TSR's maniacs. Keep your FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign PCs on their toes by adding some of these beasts to your DMing menagerie. All 64 pages are full of new creatures to sic on your party, and each page is hole-punched for easy addition to either of the MC binders.

Suggested Retail Price: \$10.95/£6.99
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DLR2 *Taladas: The Minotaurs*

AD&D® game DRAGONLANCE® accessory
by Colin McComb

The warlike race of Taladan minotaurs is striving to become the dominant military and cultural force on Kryn's continent of Taladas. In this 64-page reference guide, you'll uncover important information on the minotaurs' histo-

ry, culture, military strategies, and day-to-day way of life.

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Volume Three

by Tina Daniell

The story of the beautiful, dark-hearted Kitiara Uth Matar, from the birth of her twin brothers Caramon and Raistlin, can now be told. Kitiara's youthful mercenary deeds and her growing fascination with evil lead her to the company of a roguish band of mercenaries whose fate is intermingled with her own.

Suggested Retail Price: \$4.95/£3.99
Product No.: 8342

NEW PRODUCTS FOR FEBRUARY

DSR1 *Slave Tribes*

AD&D® game DARK SUN™ accessory
by Bill Slavicek

In the wastelands of Athas, tribes of escaped slaves fiercely defend their independent lives from their former masters and the elements. Former gladiators rule over artisans, craftsmen, and others who have gained their freedom. This 96-page accessory, the first for the DARK SUN™ world, takes your campaign beyond the cities to the untamed wilderness of Athas.

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by William W. Connors

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This, the first of a series of one-on-one adventures for the AD&D® game, takes a lone fighter PC into a remote, dangerous village. Only the bravest warriors will unravel the secrets that lie within. This adventure is tailored for a beginning-level fighter but is suitable for all PCs.

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Pools of Darkness

FORGOTTEN REALMS® novel

by James M. Ward and Anne K. Brown

The sequel to 1989's *Pool of Radiance*, this book takes up the story some years later when Ren, Shal, and Tarl are again called upon to protect the city of Phlan—which has vanished from the face of Toril itself! Our heroes unite with a shape-shifting cat, an undead ghost-knight, and others in order to find and save the city.

Suggested Retail Price: \$4.95/£3.99
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The MARVEL®-Phile

Continued from page 81

them the correct coordinates for their home dimension, just to get them to where they belonged.

Other versions of Saturnyne that Excalibur has encountered include an older version of her who rules the Great Britain of an alternate dimension. On another such alternate earth, Captain Briton met Opal Lun Sat-yr-nin, Majestrix of the Empire of True Briton. She was a ruler of a fascist nation and was the lover of the hero called Kaptain Briton. This counterpart bears the greatest resemblance to the woman who attacked the real Courtney Ross.

ROLE-PLAYING NOTES: Saturnyne is a mysterious character with a lot of authority. How she became the Omniversal Majestrix and how she continues to hold that position are unknown. There is at least one characteristic shared among all of her other-dimensional counterparts: All "Saturnynes" are fond of (at the very least) Captain Britain or Brian Braddock, his civilian identity.

Marvel bulletins

Demonica: This new "continent" was raised from the ocean floor between Hawaii and California by Dr. Demonicus and his Pacific Overlords. It has been granted admission into the United Nations, but its political, social, and economic organization has yet to be determined. Demonica's effects on shipping are currently unknown as well. Its foreign policies are vague, but it is known that the Avengers West Coast branch is not welcome on Demonica, having fought its ruler while the continent was being created.

Fury, Nick: It hasn't been an easy year for this former Howling Commando. About 2,500 new recruits for SHIELD were killed in an explosion at SHIELD Central in New York. These deaths and subsequent others were caused by the newly resurrected and thoroughly evil HYDRA, led by Fury's long-time foe, Baron Wolfgang von Strucker. Given all the stress and the pain of those losses, Nick had been on the verge of insanity, but he has recovered his strength of will. Unfortunately, a conspiracy has kept him from receiving his dosages of the Infinity Formula, a serum that has retarded his aging since World War II, and Fury's years are quickly catching up to him. In game effects, Nick is losing -1CS of Fighting, Strength, Endurance, and Agility every four days until his actual age (approximately 70-80 years) manifests itself, leaving him with Feeble scores in all those abilities.

Green Goblin II: Once again, Harry Osborn has been under a lot of pressure, and memories of his abusive father (and

the emotional conflicts the memories incurred) have caused him to have a nervous breakdown. Harry's breakdown restored his full memory—including his identity as the second Green Goblin and his knowledge that Peter Parker, his best friend, was Spider-Man! Green Goblin II confronted Spider-Man recently, but, meeting little resistance from Peter, the Goblin couldn't kill him. The Green Goblin fled and has been missing for some time; at the time of this writing, Harry's wife Liz hasn't been notified of Harry's regression to his villainous alter-ego.

Hobgoblin: Hobgoblin's demonic nature has driven him utterly insane (Reason of Poor), and he acts as if his human side and his Hobgoblin identity are separate people or personalities. The Hobgoblin considers himself an agent on Earth for good, stopping evil ones from corrupting the innocent by killing them, while his human side wants to return to the relative normalcy of his mercenary life. The Hobgoblin's body has not totally accepted his metamorphosis, and his face switches at times from his demonic goblin face to his normal human features. This change occurs randomly (roll 1d10 every round; if a 10 is rolled, he changes form), and Hobgoblin must make an Incredible Intensity Endurance FEAT when it occurs or else collapse. The pain subsides after one round, and for 1d10 - 5 rounds (minimum of one round) he remains human and relatively coherent. The Hobgoblin has become one of the most unstable and unpredictable villains active today, as can be attested by recent foes like Moon Knight, the Ghost Rider, and Spider-Man.

Kingpin: Wilson Fisk, the Kingpin, was finally defeated by the one foe he thought crushed long ago. Through Daredevil's various manipulations (with indirect aid by SHIELD), all of the Kingpin's holdings, legitimate or illegal, were destroyed by HYDRA. This loss directly caused Fisk to lose control of his organization, and his status as the crimelord of New York fell until he became just a homeless killer on the streets. He has survived, however, and it is unknown just how far he will go to regain his power.

Outlaws: Silver Sable has officially sanctioned and collected a semi-permanent quick-strike team of superhuman and highly skilled operatives called the Outlaws. Team members include Sable as the leader, with the Prowler, Rocket Racer, the Will-o-the-Wisp, and a some-time member, the Sandman.

Storm, Alicia Masters: She is not! Yes, retroactive continuity strikes again, as the blind sculptress who married Johnny Storm (the Human Torch) was a Skrull spy named Lyja. She replaced Alicia while the

team was off Earth in the first Secret Wars campaign, and she naturally fell in love with Johnny while Ben stayed on the Beyonders' planet. When her ploy was discovered, she confessed and led the team to where Paibok the Power Skrull and his legions were holding Alicia. During the battle against Paibok, Lyja sacrificed her life to save Johnny from being shot by a Skrull. Alicia Masters is now freed from suspended animation and is attempting to adapt to months of lost time while the quintet tries to return to Earth.

Terrax: Terrax has possessed the human form of Harmon Furmintz, the director of Genetech. Terrax's personality apparently eradicated Mr. Furmintz's mind, and his new body has both stabilized the cosmic energy and soil particles that comprised Terrax's former form and incorporated them into a new permanent form. His powers are approximately the same as before, though he can no longer travel off-planet without aid of some kind. Thanks to the Silver Surfer, Terrax was removed from Earth and marooned on Pluraris VI, a relatively new planet light years from Earth with no native sentient life forms.

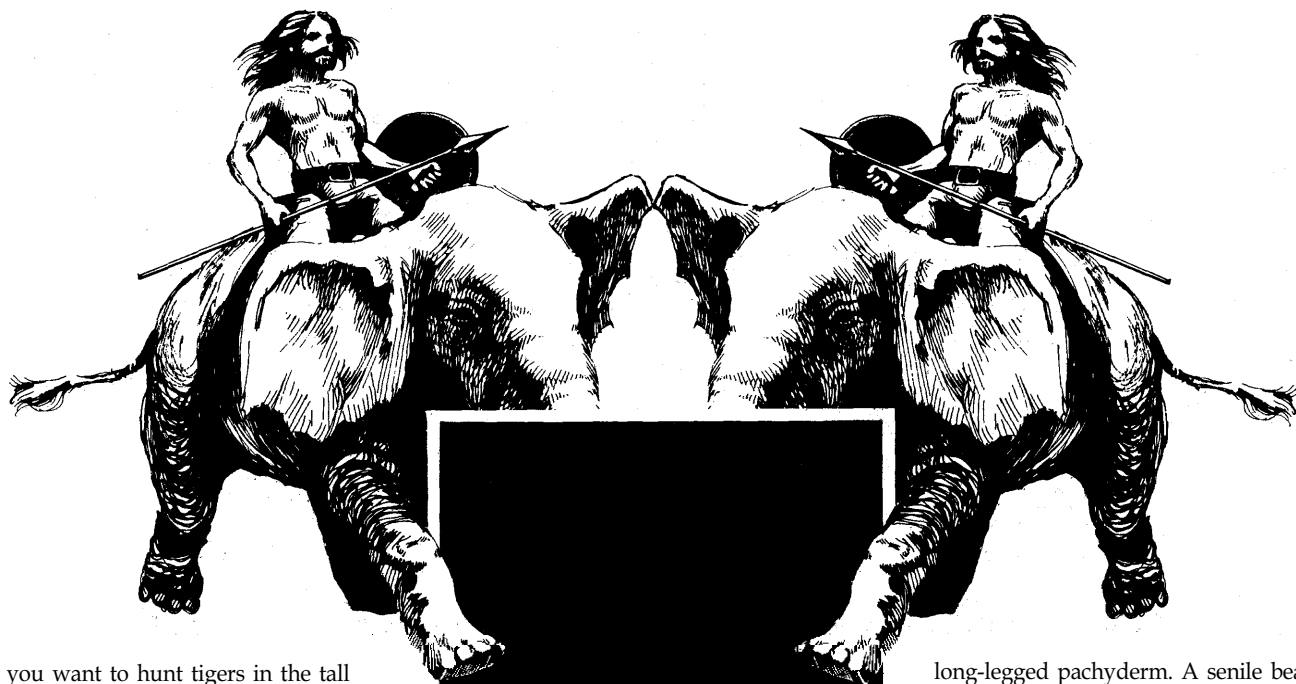
That's it for this month. Stay tuned as we continue our "Castaways" feature next month!

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LOOKING FOR MORE GAMERS?

You may think you'd have to travel to another planet to find a game convention. Finding friends who are also gamers can be a problem, too. Put your scoutsuit away and turn to the Convention Calendar in this magazine. There may be a game convention closer to your home than you think — and conventions are a great place to find friends who share your interests. Whether you like board games, role-playing games, miniature war games, or just browsing around, a game convention can be all you've hoped for. Plan to attend one soon.

So, what's it *really* like to own an elephant?



If you want to hunt tigers in the tall grass, you need an elephant—or so goes the Indian proverb. AD&D® game adventurers might extend this principle to the hunting of orcs, yuan-ti, or even small dragons. Since 3,500 B.C., people have tamed elephants for stunts, work, and war. The AD&D game's 2nd Edition *Player's Handbook* includes elephants in its equipment list for PCs who wish to buy them. Parties might also seek wild elephants, to capture them or to magically commune with these lords of the jungle.

According to the *PHB*, on page 68, a labor elephant costs 200 gp and a war elephant costs 500 gp. These prices apply only in areas where people commonly trade elephants, since a pachyderm would cost many thousands of gold pieces in other climates. As with all live-animal purchases, some elephants are worth more than others. Albino and giant-eared pygmy elephants would probably sell for up to ten times the normal prices. Charlatans often try to sell aging beasts, and other poor specimens have elongated legs or foot tumors. One can spot an old elephant by looking for pink streaks or wrinkles on its ears. A superstition in the real world warns that yellow-eyed elephants bring ill fortune, which would make them about 50 gp cheaper in fantasy lands.

In game terms, characters must pass an Animal Handling proficiency check to detect undesirable elephants. Subtract one point of movement from the speed of a

Think Big

by Thomas M. Kane

long-legged pachyderm. A senile beast has half normal hit points, causes a -5 on all Animal Training proficiency rolls (negating the bonuses described later), and walks three movement points slower than normal. Elephants with foot cancers move at half speed and die after 1-20 months. Yellow-eyed beasts suffer no known handicap, but in a fantasy world they may carry a curse or hold an evil spirit producing variable game effects. An elephant's tusks (if it has any) weigh 70-120 ((1d6 X 10) + 60) lbs. each. According to the AD&D 1st Edition *Dungeon Masters Guide*, ivory is worth 3-6 gp per pound, so the owners will get some return on their investment.

Care and feeding

There is a Nepalese proverb that goes: If you want to take revenge on your enemy, give him an elephant. First he must thank you humbly for your generosity. Then the beast will eat him out of house and home.

Elephants consume about 500 lbs. of food and 60 gallons of water per day. They need a variety of foods. In the Washington Park Zoo, for example, each elephant receives 90 lbs. of hay, 3 lbs. of oats, 46 lbs. of carrots, 46 lbs. of lettuce, a handful of vitamins, and a quarter cup of pure salt. In the wilderness, a tame elephant may obtain 300 lbs. of daily food by grazing. Owners must provide the rest. Nepalese *mahouts* (elephant tamers) carry elephant food as 30-lb. *kuchis*, or leafy bundles of sugared rice.

In most AD&D worlds, trainers probably catch their elephants wild. Although a few modern zoos breed these animals in captivity, no fantasy culture could do so without "magical resources such as food-producing spells. Under the best circumstances, a female elephant reaches maturity at 12 years old and can produce 4-5 calves in her lifetime, waiting at least three years between each birth.

Most real-world trainers capture elephants by chasing them into pens called *keddah*. These corrals should be small; if the panicked animals can move, they will injure themselves by ramming the sides. A fantasy mahout must pass an Animal Handling proficiency check at - 4 to calm a newly captured elephant (naturally, a struggling wild elephant attacks its captor, if possible). One begins training an elephant when it reaches age 14. It can do light work at 19 and reaches full maturity at 25. The creature will live to be around 50 years old, although legends say that some have reached 130.

Capabilities

The *PHB*, on page 78, allows elephants to carry up to 500 lbs. at full speed and up to 1,000 lbs. at one-third speed. Normally, a mahout never loads a working elephant with more than 600 lbs., including riders. Full parade gear for one elephant can weigh up to 1,000 lbs. A particularly strong elephant (costing at least 1,000 gp) might carry up to twice the normal burdens. The Third Book of Maccabees describes war elephants that each carried 32 warriors. Japanese supply officers supposedly burdened pack elephants with up to four tons of ammunition each during the Imphal Offensive of World War II, but this does not mean the animals normally carried this much (during the same campaign, Japanese logistics manuals suggested that officers feed their soldiers by letting the men eat grass).

An elephant normally walks at 4 *MPH*, or MV 12. It may charge at 25 *MPH* (MV 75) for a maximum distance of 150'. Elephants cannot jump at all, so even small ditches block them (you see this tactic used in zoos all the time).

A war elephant's strongest weapon is terror. Few foot soldiers dare resist an elephant's charge; when they do, the pachyderm often goes berserk, trampling friends and foes alike. Cautious generals use elephants to carry archers or their own palanquins, to give the riders a safe vantage above the battle without testing the beast's temper in close combat. Of course, if a charge scares away the enemy, the elephants need never fight.

In the AD&D BATTLESYSTEM™ rules, any troops faced with an elephant attack should make a special morale check, in addition to any others that may be required. When the elephants take casualties, they must also check morale. If this check fails, the elephants charge and attack whoever they can, moving in ran-

domly determined directions for 6d6 BATTLESYSTEM turns. Riders may either leap to safety or try to cut the animals' throats, using normal attack rules. Only spell-casters using *animal friendship* or *charm monster* spells can attempt to calm or rally them.

Historically, Hannibal lost all but one of his 37 pachyderms when he fought Rome, and the survivor did little in battles. Paradoxically, the beasts probably helped him most while being marched through the Alps. Several mountain tribes that planned to loot his army refused to approach when they saw the unknown monsters guarding Hannibal's supplies.

Role-playing notes

Individualized pets always add color to an adventure, and elephants are famous for their distinctive personalities. Common quirks seen in these creatures include phobias, obsessions, and the inability to realize that they are not humans. Beasts with the last delusion attempt to climb stairs or enter houses, or appear to fall in love with people.

Pachyderms like to wash themselves and powder with dust afterward. Most elephants have a habit of picking up anything people drop. This can be annoying, but occasionally it saves prized possessions. An infant elephant will occasionally mistake explorers for its mother. If humans respond, the real mother often assumes they are kidnapping her calf and attacks.

Some elephants are cowards, and few animals are more dangerous than a panicked elephant. Fortunately, chronically nervous pachyderms occasionally become braver if their owners keep them in the same pen as more courageous ones. Elephants do not particularly fear mice, but they worry about any small, ticklish thing that might slip into their trunks. The scent of tigers terrifies them, but one can train war elephants to overcome this fear. Many stampedes begin when chained elephants smell a jungle cat and panic, fearing that they will be unable to escape.

Elephants learn quickly, and characters with the Animal 'Raining proficiency should receive a -2 bonus on success rolls with these beasts. Elephants perceive other things, too, that their handlers never mean to teach them. They discover how to disassemble gates and know quite well when they can get bribes by refusing to budge. The saying about elephants never forgetting is true, as these animals have been known to take revenge on particular humans years after suffering mistreatment. In a fantasy world, they might reveal secrets long forgotten by people, if questioned by *speak with animals*.

For unknown reasons, Asian bull elephants periodically go insane. Scientists debate whether this insanity, called *musth*, relates to a rut, and if African elephants experience it. In *musth*, an elephant grows lethargic and dirty. The slightest disturbance sends it into a murderous frenzy.

Mahouts in Burma and Thailand try to starve bulls out of *musth*, while Indian tribes feed them coconut shells filled with opium. In game terms, the DM should secretly roll 1d6 each month to see if a bull enters *musth*. On a roll of 1, the *musth* begins. After 1d10 days, when a PC gives some routine command, the elephant attacks in fury and remains deranged for 2d10 days. Handlers may observe the onset of *musth* before it occurs by passing an Animal Lore proficiency check. A successful Animal Handling check at a + 5 penalty can reduce the duration of the madness by half.

Wild elephants live in tribes led by the eldest females. Only the most dangerous bulls dwell alone. Legends say that free elephants possess a sort of culture. They dance, meditate, and cherish privacy. Some mated pairs grow deeply romantic about each other and die of "broken hearts" if separated. Other elephants are said to commit adultery or seek revenge on unfaithful mates. Elephants lead their sick to medicinal plants and occasionally commit mercy killings. No person has ever seen a wild elephant die naturally.

The people of the jungle say that elephants have secrets. Fantasy pachyderms might remember magic that men do not, particularly arts of healing, and may have fabulous treasures. Real-world rumors once spoke of elephants with pearls in their skulls. Others say that bulls in *musth* sweat a fluid from their necks that can be brewed into *philtres of love*, potions of *extra-healing*, elixirs that restore hair, or a universal poison antidote. There does not really seem to be an "elephant graveyard." However, in the 18th century, explorers found something like this in a part of Angola not frequented by any known human tribe. The explorers discovered a heap containing four tons of tusks, an unidentifiable wooden fetish, and countless skulls of men. Interesting, no?

Bibliography

The following sources may especially interest DMs who want to feature elephants in their adventures.

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Dinerstein, Eric. "Elephants." *Smithsonian* magazine (Sept. 1988): 70.
Tisdale, Sallie. "Elephants." *New Yorker* magazine (Jan. 23, 1989): 38. Ω

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Temporal compressor (TL 13)

A temporal compressor field is a warp generator of sorts; it speeds time within the field. This has a number of interesting effects. Electromagnetic energy leaving the field is increased in frequency: heat

infrared energy) becomes light, visible light (green through violet) becomes ultraviolet, and high-energy radiation becomes deadly radiation. For each dilation level, all electromagnetic energy doubles in frequency (hertz, abbreviated as Htz). Thus,



violet light (3×10^{14} Htz) placed under dilation level four (doubled four times) becomes soft x-rays (4.8×10^{15} Htz). Some frequency ranges of electromagnetic radiation follow:

- Light: 6×10^{14} Htz
- X-rays: 3×10^{16} to 6×10^{20} Htz
- Hard radiation: Above 3×10^{19} Htz

One rad (radiation absorbed dose) of radiation equals 3×10^{19} Htz; 10 rads are thus equal to 3×10^{20} Htz. Divide the frequency of radiation by 3×10^{19} to find the amount of rads it represents.

Note also that objects and beings within the field receive (and perceive) outside electromagnetic energy at a fraction of its normal frequency, based on the field's dilation level. Consequently, the dilation level also serves as protection against outside radiation.

Living objects suffer just as startling an effect. If the majority of a lifetime is inside a field, all parts of the body outside take 1d -4 points of damage per second per dilation level from the superaccelerated blood flow and nerve synapses. If the majority of the iifeform is outside the field, those parts inside take 1d - 3 points of damage per second per dilation level from gangrene, as blood flow stops in the "slow" parts of the body.

Each dilation level doubles the time expansion. Each dilation level requires twice as much energy as before. Table 1 charts the expansion. The basic field size is one cubic yard, and the field is always spherical. Doubling the field dimensions cubes the energy use. Basic energy use is figured as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} &[\text{Field size (cy)}] \times [\text{dilation level}] \times 100 = \\ &\quad \text{wattage use} \\ &[\text{wattage use}] \div 1,000,000 = \\ &\quad \text{megawattage use} \end{aligned}$$

Table 1
Temporal Compressor Field:
Expansion Ratios

Level	Ratio
1	2:1
2	4:1
3	8:1
4	16:1
5	32:1
6	64:1

Table progression continues.

Table 2
Examples of Temporal Compressors (TC)

Item	cost	Weight	Basic wattage use
Booth-sized TC (2 cy)	\$ 50,000	35 lbs.	200
Vehicle-sized TC (10 cy)	\$150,000	75 lbs.	5,000

The cost of a temporal compressor unit in dollars is found by using the following formula: $5,000 \times [(\text{maximum field size (cy)}) \times ((\text{maximum dilation value}) \div 2)]$. A base cost of \$25,000 is added to this for the final result.

The weight of a temporal compressor unit in pounds is found by using the following formula: $[(\text{maximum field size (cy)}) \times 5] + [(\text{maximum dilation value}) + 20]$.

Every 20 lbs. (and fractions thereof) of a temporal compressor takes up one cubic yard. At TL 12, reduce the weight of a temporal compressor by half. At TL 13, reduce the energy cost by half. Table 2 shows two examples of TL 13 temporal compressors (maximum dilation level 5).

Biological factory (TL 9)

Through the miracle of genetic engineering, a biological drug factory can be installed inside a living being. This artificial (but organlike) item is usually attached to an existing gland. The factory feeds on the body's natural metabolism to synthesize the drug of the user's choice (use the lists of drugs available from the GURPS CYBER-PUNK and GURPS ULTRA-TECH rules books). Note that the factory can produce only one sort of drug, and it must be "built" for that purpose, so it cannot later change the sort of drug it creates. If the gland to which the factory is attached is an internal one (e.g., an adrenal gland), the dosages can be given only to the user; in this situation, the drugs can be useful for someone who is chronically ill. If the gland can give off external products (e.g., sweat gland, tear gland, etc.), the drugs can be administered to others. A soft switch implanted beneath the skin at a certain location is pushed to release the drug or to stop the drug's production, unless the factory is to produce the drug constantly.

The cost of this item in dollars is based on the cost of the drug it makes, using the following formula:

$$100 \times [\text{single drug-dosage cost}] \times [\text{number of daily uses}]$$

For example, Quickheal goes for \$50 a dose. A biological factory that produces one such dose per day costs $(100 \times 50 \times 1) = \$5,000$.

A GM may rule that some drugs cannot be synthesized. Dosages are not cumulative. If a character with a biological factory suffers starvation or a major disease, a Health roll must be made. Failure means the delicate wetware of the factory is destroyed.

At each Tech Level above 9, reduce the cost of the factory by 10%.

Watcher-floater camera (TL 10)

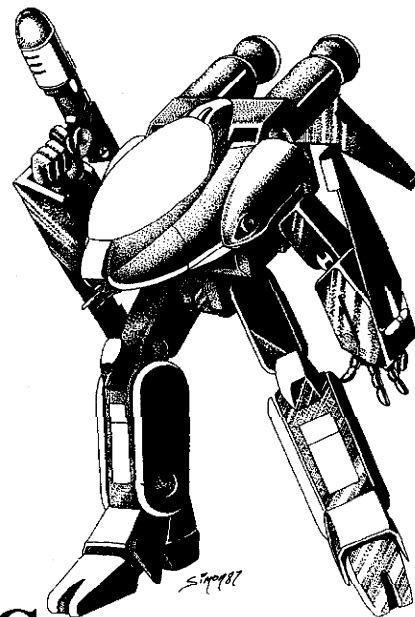
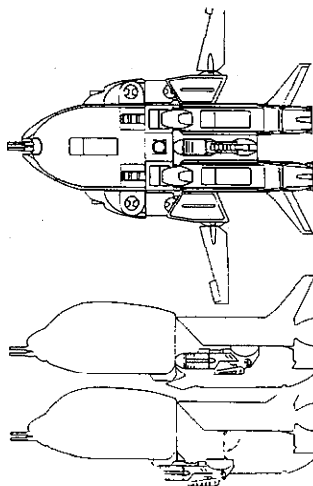
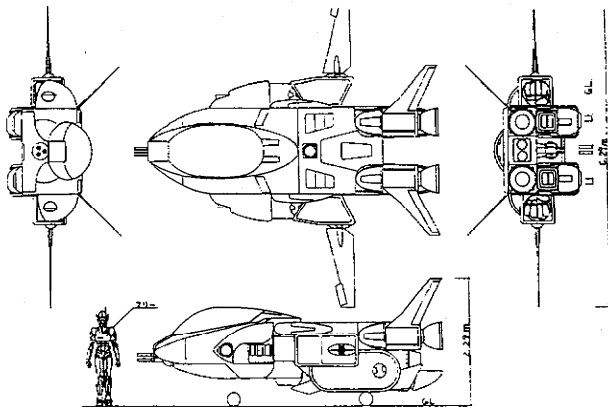
Able to hover as it records images and sounds, a watcher-floater camera can be used for surveillance, movie production, or video-log records. The camera can be programmed to remain in place, follow a given person or object, or follow a preselected course. A watcher-floater camera has a limited, dedicated artificial intelligence (IQ 7) to help in decision-making; when the camera thinks it is in danger, it can eject its tape to ensure the latter's safety. A watcher-floater camera can record 20 hours of information per tape. It has a Move of 10 and no practical maximum altitude. A watcher-floater camera uses one C-cell power cell and has DR 2 and HT 2/6. This device costs \$2,000 and weighs 5 lbs. At TL 10, taping time doubles, artificial intelligence goes to IQ 9, and Move to 14. At TL 11, a watcher-floater camera requires a B-cell power cell, has all TL 11 advantages, but has a Move of 16. For another \$200, this device can be fitted with a transmitter having a range in miles equal to its Tech Level cubed (TL³).

Video glasses (TL 8)

Jammed with TL 8 technology, these glasses are also fully functional, bifocal video cameras. They appear to be slightly bulky sunglasses. Inside the frame and lens are all the gadgetry required to produce and transmit video images, which are sent to a booster that must be located within a number of yards equal to the manufacturer's Tech Level; in turn, this booster transmits the images for a distance in miles equal to the Tech Level cubed (TL³). The video glasses weigh 6 oz. and cost \$2,000. To have "normal" clear lenses, rather than the darkened "sunglasses" style, the cost is \$5,000. For each Tech Level above 9, the cost is reduced by half the previous TL value, and the weight is reduced by 1 oz. down to a 1 oz. minimum value.



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Volume Five: Presents episodes 49: *A new Recruit*, 50: *Triumvirate*, and 51: *Clone Chamber*. It is decided to induct Zor into the army of the Southern Cross. A full scale assault is launched against the Masters. Zor, Dana and Bowie get closer to the secret of the **Robotech™ Masters** and protoculture. Plus epic space battles! Available late March, 1992.

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Volume Seven: Presents episodes 55: *Dana in Wonderland*, 56: *Crisis Point*, and 57: *Day Dreamer*. The battle continues to escalate, with terrible consequences. Zor seems to be going mad, Dana is becoming more rebellious, Bowie finds love and the mystery continues. Available late May, 1992.

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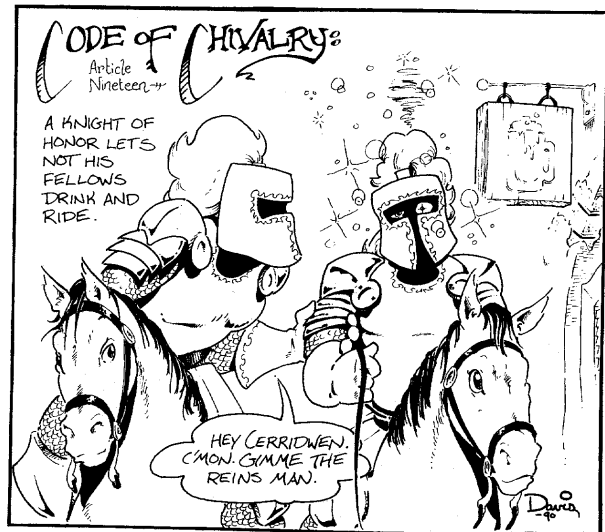
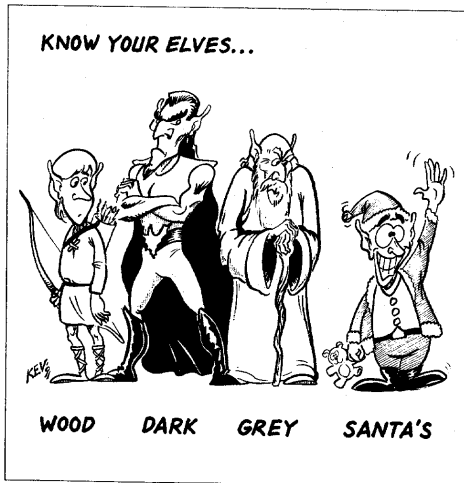
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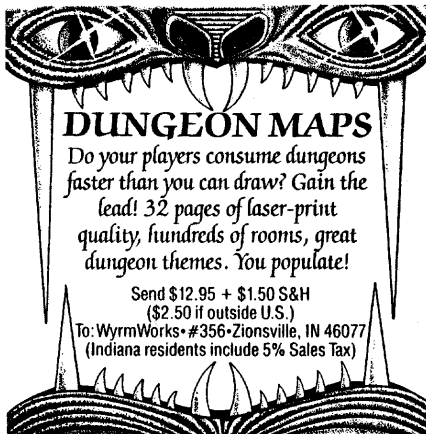
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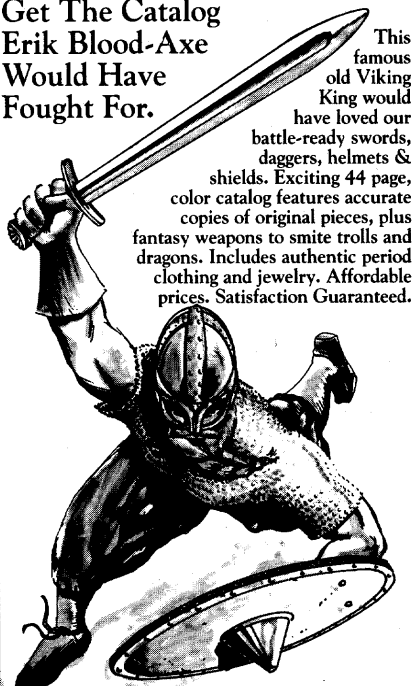
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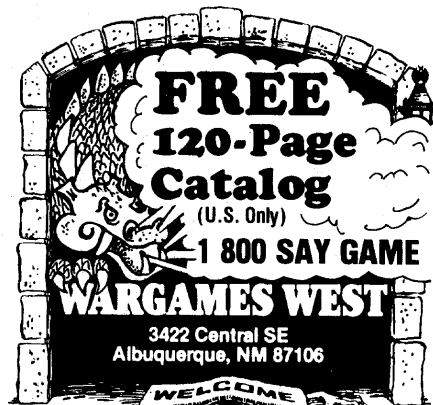
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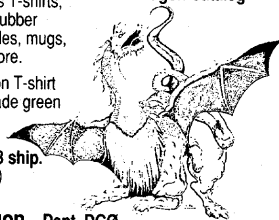
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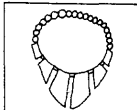
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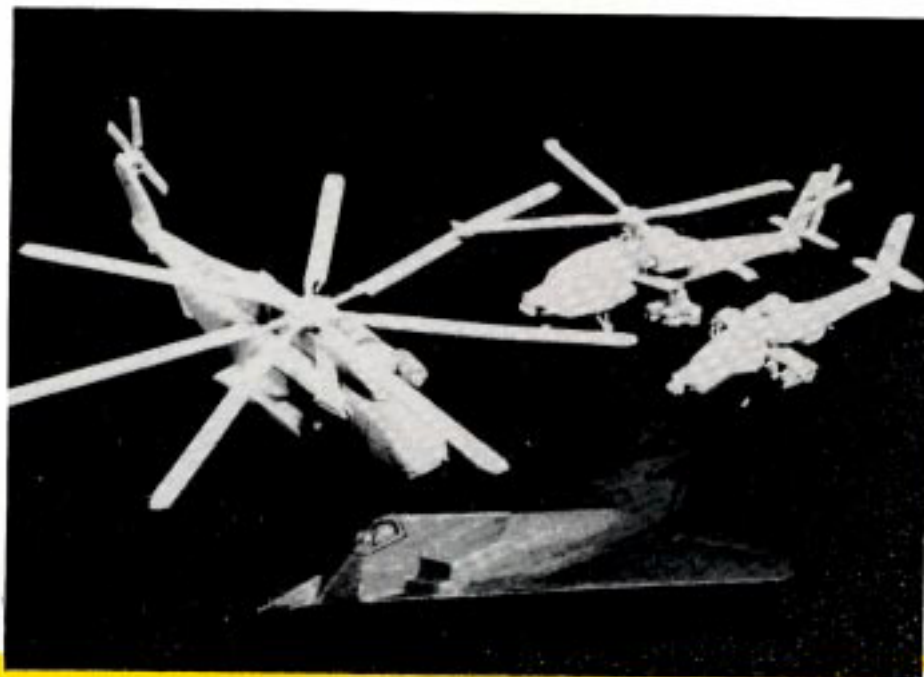
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Through the LOOKING Glass

©1991 by Robert Bigelow

Photography by Mike Bethke



Clockwise from upper left: SH-53 and Apache helicopter (C-in-C); Apache helicopter—one-piece casting (Inservice); F-117a Stealth fighter (C-in-C)

Where were you a year ago on January 16th?

Before we get into the Desert Storm section, I want to include the addresses of the companies making modern military miniatures, which so many of you have requested. Please check your hobby stores first for these figures; if they are unwilling or unable to get the miniatures for you, write to:

C-in-C Precision in Miniatures
8090 University Ave. NE
Fridley MN 55432
(612) 780-8554

GHQ
2634 Bryant Ave. South
Minneapolis MN 55408

Croissant Miniatures, Inc.
P.O. Box 510
Lakewood CA 90712-0510

Simtac, Inc.
20 Attawan Road
Niantic CT 06357
(203) 739-3609

Miniatures' product ratings

*	Poor
**	Below average
***	Average
****	Above average
*****	Excellent

Croissant Miniatures does not make direct sales to the public, but it can supply you with the names of its dealers. GHQ and Croissant offer Combat Command packs, scaled-down groups of vehicles that provide ready-to-use combat groups.

Desert Storm—the air war

On January 16, 1991, the world observed a rare sight. We actually watched an air raid on a hostile nation on TV, and we saw it from the point of view of the target. The tracer rounds racing across the Baghdad sky made an interesting light show, but they didn't accomplish much otherwise. Part of the reason for this was a little-known operation that nullified the Iraqi air-control system. Almost from the moment the first Coalition aircraft landed in Saudi Arabia after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, the United States and her allies had probed Iraqi airspace to find its holes and weaknesses. Operation Normandy targeted the early-warning radars and was accomplished using a flight of Apache helicopters that launched Hellfire missiles, which destroyed radar sites and vehicles.

As the air war got underway, F-117a Stealth fighters came in and dropped special bombs on targets to further neutralize the Iraqi radar system. Tomahawk cruise missiles hugged the ground and hit targets of all types. In the first two weeks of the Persian Gulf war, these targets included command, communications, and supply facilities. Iraqi antiaircraft ranged from elaborate radar-guided systems to eye-aimed trailer-mounted guns, but as radar systems died, the guns became almost useless. Coalition forces soon reigned supreme in the sky.

Iraqi Scud missile sites, both mobile and fixed, had to be hit again and again by the Coalition. Even then, many incoming Scuds had to be destroyed by Patriot missiles. Iraqi planes were targeted to prevent them from delivering ordinance that included possible chemical or explosive loads. Iraq had the SU-24, which compared favorably with the F-111B and could carry almost any bomb load. The Frogfoot ground-attack aircraft could have hurt Allied supply lines if it had gone unchecked, and the Mirage fighter could have attacked shipping in the gulf—but they never got the chance.

If you want to find out more about the Persian Gulf war, I recommend *Gulf Wars*, by Richard Jupa and Jim Dingeman, from 3W Publications; it's an excellent capsule history that's easy to read and well illustrated. Another good book for pictures of the air forces involved is Osprey Books' *Air Power: The Coalition and Iraqi Air Forces*.

Now, on to the reviews:

Reviews

Grenadier Models, Inc.

P.O. Box 305
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Grenadier Models UK Ltd.

19 Babbage Road
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Gren 5000 FANTASY WARRIORS * game **** ½

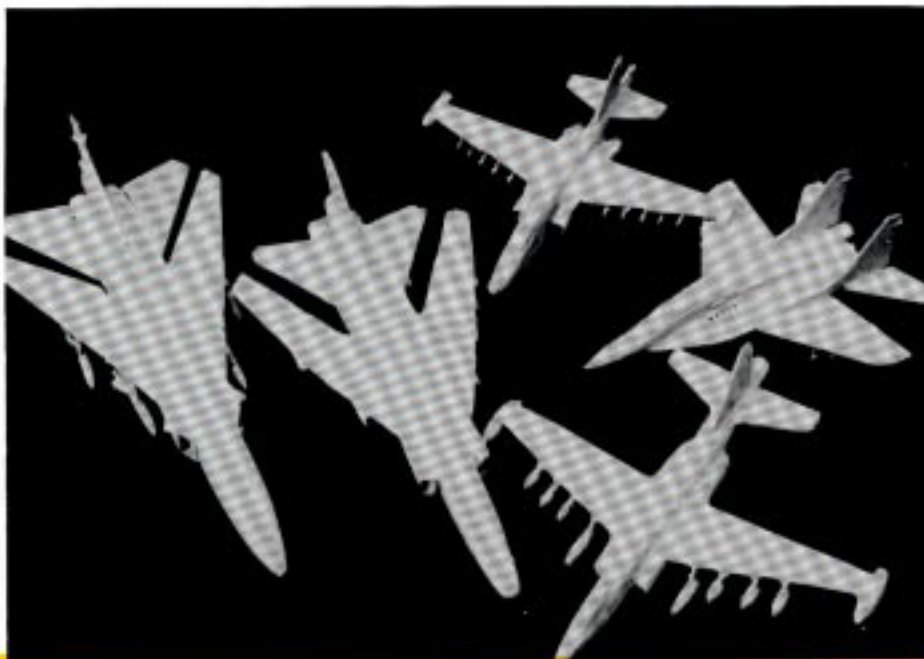
One of the best ways to get someone into the hobby of miniatures is to present him with a game that contains both the rules and enough pieces to play the game out to an equitable conclusion. In the past, these sets have been few, being usually limited to historical games or the SILENT DEATH* game by ICE (see this column's review of the latter in DRAGON® issue #165). Now, we have a set of playable fantasy miniatures rules—with miniatures.

This set comes in a colorful yellow and red box, the back of which shows a picture of the figures included, both painted and unpainted. Painting instructions are on the sides of the bottom box half, with suggestions on how to modify your pieces for individuality. The paint list is good, but the instructions do not include any step-by-step pictures for the novice to reference, and this isn't remedied in the rules.

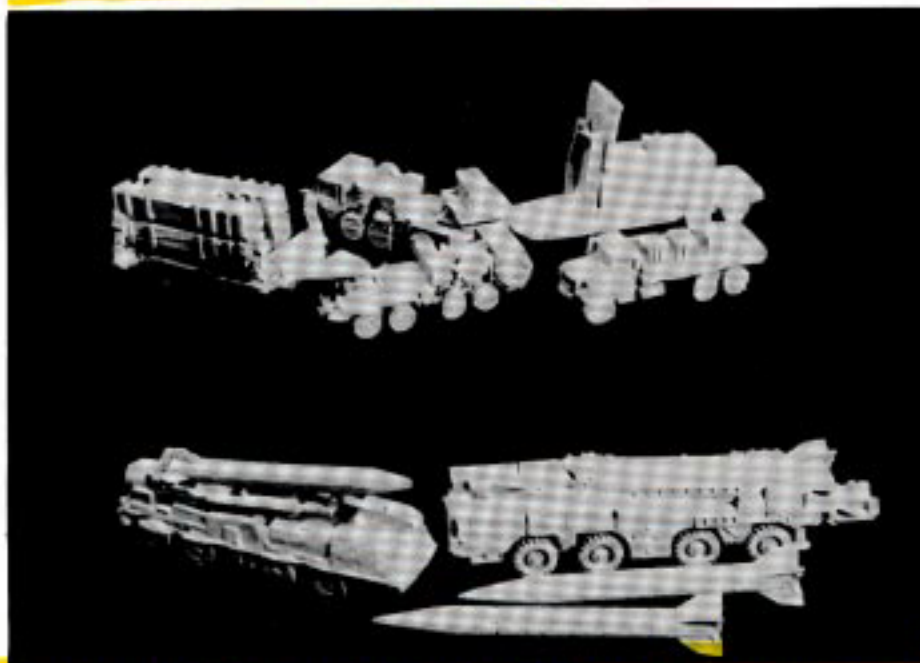
The rule book is 56 pages long, including army lists and a set-up sheet that must be copied several times before battle. The rules are clear, having ample illustrations and examples to reinforce them. The rule book also gives players ideas and advice by using a talking orc and dwarf that tell personal stories. The game sequence is laid out step by step, from picking a playing surface to setting up the terrain. It details army organization and the different steps in combat, and presents an interesting twist in its use of boasts by leaders to lend strength to a unit, as long as the boasts hold true. A list of boasts is offered from which players may choose; I can see some interesting possibilities for role-playing here, with players coming up with new boasts. The rule set includes scouting as a form of battle initiative, with the loser having to set up first and possibly having to fight at an inopportune time of day.

The box includes a full set of paper counters that are needed to mark the status of the units involved. These counters include ammunition, unit morale (bloodlust, shaken, etc.), magic points used in combat, attack standards, "hold," a large section of walls, and two 12" rulers for movement. There's also a turn gauge that, when used with the hourglass, sets the time of the battle at either day or night. This day/night option benefits certain monsters who otherwise wouldn't stand a chance under certain lighting conditions.

The box also contains six groups—three types of dwarves and three of orcs—of 17 plastic figures each, for a total of 102



Clockwise from upper left: Su-24 (C-in-C); Su-24 (Scotia); Su-25 Frogfoot, MiG-29 fighter-bomber (C-in-C); Su-25 Frogfoot (Croissant)



Clockwise from upper left: Patriot launcher and command trailer, with Hemett cabs and power truck (Croissant); Scud launcher and spare missiles (GHQ); Scub B and launcher (Davco)

figures. The troops all share some basic attributes. They are made out of plastic and have 1" -square bases with mold lines. Each figure has a very annoying stub of plastic in the middle of its back; this stub must be carefully cut away unless you want to glue a shield on the figure's back. There aren't enough shields for all the figures, but shields may be jury-rigged by using buttons from any fabric store.

The dwarves are dressed uniformly in long chain-mail suits with plates on their shoulders and arms, high shoes, and rounded helmets, each with a ridge in front. Their faces are stern, and their

beards drop to their knees. A knife is molded on each of the non-missile-firing troops, and they all have back plates. The missile-armed dwarves are equipped with axes and undetailed crossbows. Their arms are much too short but can be extended with a little work; a mold line runs around each figure and must be trimmed. The other two types of dwarven figures are armed with either a spear or an axe.

The orcs all wear chain mail covered by tunics or jerkins. All facial detail is plain and includes jutting fangs. Their arms are bare from shoulders to bracelets. On two figure types, head hair is visible but with



Mauler (Ral Partha Enterprises)



DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® Basic Heroes Set (Ral Partha Enterprises)

poor detail; the last figure has a hood that probably protects his eyes (he is an archer). All the orcs have extra weapons that range from short swords to knives, and all have spare pouches or bags. The orcs' major weapons are halberds, bows, or curved, serrated swords.

This is an excellent game to get people started on miniatures gaming. I do have some suggestions for everyone who wants to play this game:

1. Mount the paper counters on larger circular counters that have metal edges or are fairly thick. This way, a counter can be picked up with a magnet or by hand without bending or damaging it.

2. Make a photocopy of the back cover of the rule book immediately, as handling the rule book leaves fingerprints that can obscure future photocopies. Keep one clear photocopy in a plastic bag as a master for future use.

I personally don't like the counter system, as counters tend to clutter the gaming area; this system also takes time to get used to it. Movement is slow when you play on a 4' X 8' table or larger, but you can adopt your own movement rules. Gamers in my club complained that after a couple of games the orcs always seem to lose, but the rules do seem to be balanced. The figures are too big for standard 25-mm scale but should work well with Games Workshop's "large" 25-mm figures. Last, but not least, can't anyone make any fantasy race but dwarves?

This game is an excellent buy at \$30, even if all you want are the 102 figures for about \$.30 each.

Ral Partha Enterprises

5938 Carthage Court
Cincinnati OH 45212

Ral Partha Enterprises

c/o Minifigs
1/5 Graham Road, Southampton
UNITED KINGDOM SO2 0AX

20-809 Mauler

This lead figure is for FASA's BATTLE-TECH® game, and it conforms to the picture of the 90-ton Mauler 'Mech shown on page 203 of FASA's *Technical Readout 3050*. It has a height of 47 mm and a width of 30 mm. There was minimal flash, and the figure was easily constructed from the pieces provided. Mold lines are camouflaged by actual plating ridges. My only complaint is that the edges could have been slightly sharper on the torso autocannon. Care should be taken when priming this figure, as detail will disappear with thick primer coats. This figure is highly recommended if you have the Mauler in your lance and want to play with miniatures instead of stand-up cardboard figures in BATTLETECH games. It costs \$5.50.

10-510 DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® Basic Heroes Set

Once upon a time, there were large numbers of miniatures sets that contained a basic party for people who were just starting to play either the AD&D® or D&D® game. These generic sets started to disappear, and it became hard to choose an all-in-one product. Now, Ral Partha has introduced a generic set for the Basic D&D game that could also be used in an AD&D game. The set contains 10 lead figures, all in 25-mm scale. These are nice, though I'm not sure I would have imag-

ined having some of the more unusual figures in an adventuring party.

The halfling rogue's figure stands 18½ mm and is mounted on a circular base with cobblestone detail. Detail is excellent, with the hair on his feet and head appearing to show every strand. He wears simple pants and shirt, with his coat and short cape held by a simple clasp. He has several pouches attached to his belt, and a dagger lies on his right hip. His face is more human than halfling, but there is a distinctive eye patch over the right eye. The figure actually has a sling in his right hand, complete with rock.

The enchantress is 24 mm tall and is scantily clad in flowing silks from the waist down. Her gown is secured by a very thin belt that holds up a pouch and leaves her legs bare. She wears rope sandals. The figure has a bare midriff and a cut-off shirt-type top. Her left arm supports a well-detailed cat. Jewelry accents her bare arms and shoulders. A staff is raised in her right hand, and she appears to be yelling. Her long hair is well done and looks like it partially covers a backpack. The only error on this figure is a crack on the right thigh at the junction of the hip.

The cleric is Oriental in appearance. Detailing is excellent, including holy water bottles on his belt, a water skin under his left arm, and a holy symbol hanging from his belt. He wears chain mail beneath his multilayered frock. Belts support his water sack and the sun shield strapped to his back. A large hammer is lofted over his head in a striking position.

The female fighter is well armored except on her thighs. Her boots and armor are ornate. She wears gauntlets and bracers on her arms, and bolos and a potion bottle hang from her belt. She has a sword

in her right hand; her left hand is open. Her head is thin, but her features are good and she has a necklace. Her layered hair goes back into a pony tail. This is another good figure.

The swashbuckler looks like a well-done refugee from an Errol Flynn pirate film. A buckler is held on his left wrist, and he is preparing to throw a knife with that hand. Chain mail is visible under his shirt. There is excellent add-on detail, like chains and pennants, and the figure would make a good leader for a boarding party at sea.

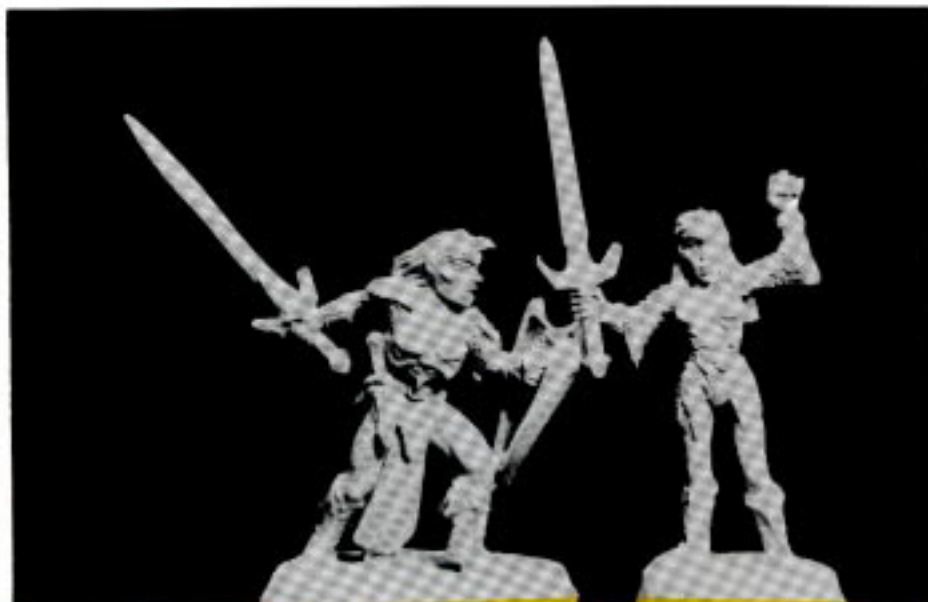
The female thief is almost comic. This good-looking female wears tight pants and blouse, with her bodice slightly open and no apparent weapons (or place to hide them). She innocently gestures, "Who me?" as she walks forward, her right hand hidden behind her short cloak. In that hand (surprise!) is a short sword. It's a well-done figure with a cute twist.

The rakasta fighter is an armored, humanoid cat standing on his back legs. With the snarl on his face and the prominence of his teeth, you know he's in a fighting mood. His base is cobblestone.

The elf fighter has very prominent features, including a sharp, angular face, pointed ears, and drawn-back hair. He is dressed in fancy leather armor with tights and a long cape. His sword is raised over his head in his right hand, and daggers stand out from his belt. A quiver of arrows and a bow on his back proves that another character is loaded for bear. This is one of the better male elf figures I have seen lately. His base is covered with leaves, and he is charging to the fray.

The mage figure is tall at 26 mm, and he appears even taller with a cane or staff raised over his head in his right hand. His left hand holds a wand as if to fire at a foe. He has a gaunt face with a thin beard, rather like Uncle Sam. A hat covers his head, and his face has a look of intense concentration. His puffy pants and blouse look like the traditional garb of a Cossack; an ornate vest is also present. His belt supports multiple boxes of pouches and a knife. As if to emphasize that he is a mage, an owl, presumably his familiar, rides on his shoulder.

This party couldn't afford a pack mule, so it brought a dwarf fighter. This small guy must be the mobile weapons platform of his unit. He has a pole arm, a mallet, a mace, three throwing axes, a knife, and a weird shield with a snarling bobcat in bas-relief. For extra equipment, he has a pick axe, lantern, several belt pouches, a blanket or bedroll, and a big backpack. He is wearing no visible armor except a groin protector and something under his pants protecting his shins. His clothing is gathered in spots, causing it to puff out, and his beard looks strange in ringlets and braids. He has a gruff look on his face and appears to be slightly angry, maybe because he's just stepped on a skull. We may have just found the complete dwarf figure for the D&D game.



Dark Elf War Chief & Princess (Ral Partha)

This set is pretty good, even if I don't agree with all the choices. The price for the set is \$12.95.

FA-78 Dark Elf War Chief *****

The Dark Elf War Chief is scaled to 25 mm and is made of lead. The figure is 24 mm to the eyes and is mounted on a large, undecorated oval base with a small mold line that can be easily fixed. The figure is dressed in a chain-mail suit that extends just past his hips; he also wears a pair of high, soft boots with leather tops and fringes. A form-fitting breast plate extends to cover part of his back. His right arm and hand are covered by a gauntlet, and he holds a bastard sword with upturned guards and a jewel at the end of its pommel. His left hand holds a triangular shield with a bas-relief front. His face is thin and angular, and he seems to yell defiance. The facial detail is excellent, although some of it is shallow. His hair streams down his shoulders, and individual hair detail is good.

I highly recommend this figure to anyone with a dark elf army. It could be a champion, leader, or common soldier. It's well done and a bargain at \$1.50 each.

Dark Elf Princess *****

This female figure is mounted on a round base with a undetailed surface. It is molded to true 25 mm scale and is 23 mm at the eyes. She wears chain mail with form-fitting plates over her abdomen, chest, and stomach. The chain mail ends the upper thigh. Her legs are bare but slightly angular, with hard ridges from a mold line that is easy to clean up, and with high boots with engravings and chains at the ankles. The chain mail ends at her elbows; her arms are "decorated" with bracers. A ring showing prominently on her left hand, and her right hand holds a sword almost identical to that of the War



The Sorcerer (Black Dragon Pewter)

Chief. Her face is excellent, with her mouth open slightly as if casting a spell. Her hair is swept back and falls down to midback.

This figure could serve several different functions in a dwarf army. It is highly recommended at \$1.50 each.



Dark Elf Cursed Spider Mount (RAFM Company)



Dark Elf Fighter (RAFM Company)

Black Dragon Pewter

2700 Range Road
North Bellmore NY 11710

9233 The Sorcerer

I want to introduce a set that should have shared the holiday-gifts column, but it arrived too late. This set is made of pewter and is about 53-mm scale. The scene is a busy one, with small detail and an impressive addition.

The base consists of two levels. The bottom level is a three-quarters oval with a flat back, measuring 65 mm at its widest spot. It has engraved, rough stones around the edge, with dirt between the edge stones and the square center level. The flat back of the base is engraved with the name of the piece, bas-relief fruit and leaves, and a flower that faces out to the

rear and serves as the backdrop for the square pedestal level and support for the wizards mirror. The square platform is also blocked at the edge and serves as a stage.

On center stage is a wizard who measures 55 mm tall. He is dressed in simple, flowing robes with large vertical creases flowing slightly to one side as if blown by a breeze. His left hand supports a spell book that has detailed runes on the front cover, and his right hand stretches out over a brazier. His face is gaunt with high cheeks and a look of concentration. Peeking from behind his high pointed hat is either a pseudo-dragon or an ugly imp who looks perturbed.

To the wizard's left is a set of interconnecting tables. The main table is a flat board graced with a demon skull with twin tusks and a fleece, with ram's horns growing from its forehead to support a pentagram-shaped tabletop. The top supports a candle and holder, another spell book, ink, rings, and spell components. The table's base also supports a brazier that is joined to the tabletop; the brazier looks like a large torch with a shell top. A lizard is crawling along the base of the brazier. On top of the demon's skull is a drop of liquid, the result of a spill; it gives the appearance of being mercury. The back shelf contains a well-melted candle at the far right, a pitcher with a jeweled stopper and a lizard handle, and what looks like an incense burner or jar.

The final background detail of the piece is a holographic "mirror" behind the wizard. The support is a skeletal demon with outstretched arms and curled-up legs. The mirror frame is a rough-cut stone circle with a flying dragon on the upper right and a multilevel castle on the lower left. An owl sits on top of the frame. The mirror itself is a well-done holograph of the human eye, with skin creases easily seen

and eyelashes visible. The iris, cornea, veins, and tear duct are also seen in great detail.

This is a striking set that could serve as a centerpiece for a pewter collection. I feel that it is an excellent value at \$75.

RAFM Company, Inc.

20 Parkhill Road E.
Cambridge, Ontario
CANADA N1R 1P2

4006 Dark Elf Cursed Spider

Mount

4003 Dark Elf Fighter

**** 1/2

These are two of several sets now available in the Dark Elf line. They are scaled to 25 mm, the fighter being 24 mm tall. The figures are made of soft lead and come with few extras.

The cursed spider mount has a leg span of 80 mm long by 50 mm wide when standing. The figure comes in six pieces: four separate legs, the insect body, and the mutated human torso. The figure comes packed in such a way that it rests flat against the ground. This is easy to fix by gently bending the middle legs and altering the cut slightly on the legs, which also ensures a better fit. You will then have to carefully bend the glued-on legs after the adhesive dries to achieve the height you want. The abdomen of the spider includes the holes for spinning webs and several warty protuberances. Hair extends across the back of the spider's body and up its "human" back. The fit between the body segments and legs is good but could be better. The cavity in which the human torso sits is clear and without flash. You will have to cut off a small part of the ball joint on the bottom of the human part to make it fit well. The upper body has flabby skin and long arms ending in claws. You will need to trim or file the armpits if you want the figure to look right. The despairing face has a fanged mouth, buggy eyes, a bulging skull, a thin jaw with high cheekbones, and pointed ears.

The figure comes with a headstone topped by a bas-relief of a skull, and two staves topped by human skulls and flapping ribbons. There was little flash on this kit, and it could be excellent with a little filling. Its cost is \$5.

The fighter is a nice piece. He wears metallic boots that are hinged and have plates that protect his shins and knees. The legs are bare and blocky, with flat backs that belie true muscle structure. The figure wears chain mail with a groin and buttock protector. His shirt is secured by a thin belt; a pouch with a clasp and skull hangs on his right side, and a sheath hangs on his left. A suspender-type arrangement supports his shoulder plates, and anchoring to his belt. His right arm has a bracer on the wrist and a dagger in his hand. His left hand is covered by a gauntlet and holds a long sword. Both weapons are held ready to attack.

The dark elf's face is thin and seems to be concentrating. His hair is cut in a long, triangular shape and stands straight up. On the left side of his head, a pointed ear is clearly visible.

This figure is accompanied by a stand molded to represent a cave floor. The stand is well done, but I think it could have been left out to lower the price. The cost is slightly high at \$1.75, but it's a good figure.

The Viking Forge

1727 Theresa Lane
Powhatan VA 23139

5001 Dwarf Army Command ****

This dwarf set from Viking Forge consists of four different figures, all made of lead and scaled for 25 mm. All figures have round bases with surfaces molded to resemble grass or dirt, and all are armed.

Figure #1 is a falconer dressed in a set of scale mail that falls to below his knees and a pair of heavy boots. Two shrunken heads dangle from his wide belt. Both hands are covered by gauntlets; his left hand clutches a four-hooked mace with back-facing spikes, and his right supports a shield with a warped, twisted face that looks almost as if the shield should belong to an orc rather than a dwarf. A fur cloak drops from his shoulders, and a hood covers his head. A falcon sits on his right shoulder. The dwarfs facial detail is fair, but the eye patch and beard are good.

Figure #2 is the standard bearer and is also the pack mule for the group. He is dressed in a quilted armor that leaves only his boots exposed. (My sample has flash around the boots that will need special work, with much work required to fix the area between his left leg and the simple round shield.) His belt rides low and has a double pouch on the right side. His front is criss-crossed by straps and belts. On his back is a large pack with straps, a coil of rope secured to the side of the pack, a wine skin, the haft of a weapon, and a small holding pouch. His head is covered by a simple Norman-style helmet. The facial detail is poor, with the eyes grossly off level and having an Oriental shape. The beard is not detailed, nor is the mustache; these grow together and drop to the knees. The standard pole is a very simple pointed spear. With a little work, this figure could be good.

Figure #3, the king, is dressed in chain mail with plates covering his shoulders and chest. The boots are well done, and his cape is clearly visible. His stomach has a distinct bulge, stretching out a wide, detailed belt that looks like tooled leather. Mailed gauntlets cover his hands, and the right hand clutches a long axe. A sheathed sword is present under his left hand. His head is covered by a jeweled crown that leaves a halo of hair at the crown's bottom. The king's face has a tired and haggard look; his long beard is closely

trimmed.

The figures are well done but not up to high standards. They are an interesting mix and are a good value at \$4 per pack of four.

Alternative Armies

6 Parkway Court
Glaidsdale Parkway, Nottingham
UNITED KINGDOM NG8 4GN
(Available to hobby stores in the U.S.A.
through Armory Distributors)

OH2-Hobgoblin Raiders *** 1/2

These lead figures are presumed to be scaled to 25 mm. The figures all have irregular, oval-shaped, undetailed bases that will require some work to remove flash and mold lines. The pack contains five fighters, all too small in scale size to be hobgoblins, as per the AD&D® 2nd Edition *Monstrous Compendium*, and too big and too well armored to be regular goblins, unless you're playing with larger figures.

Figure #1 is in a crouched position, wearing plate armor with spikes over the upper part of his torso. Breeches that end at high-topped boots are worn over his lower torso. His bare arms have good muscle detail, but they appear to be almost molded solid with the legs and there are rough spots and flash. His right hand holds an axe, and his left holds a buckler shield with a large spike. His head is covered by a helmet with cheek guards. The flat face, fangs, and nose are evident, but his eyes are not clearly defined. This is the worst figure in the set and is definitely not up to industry standards.

Figure #2 is dressed in a chain-mail shirt and cloth kilt. The legs are bare except for a knee protector on the left leg and high boots. A rope belt supports a dagger on the right side and several pouches at the rear. His arms are bare; the right arm has a spiked bracelet and holds an undetailed sword. His facial features are clear, with his mouth open wide in a scream. Spikes decorate his helmet. Muscle detail is good, and there was little flash.

Figure #3 wears padded armor that covers the entire upper half of his body, with laced plate mail over his torso. Trousers and high boots finish his garb. The belt supports a knife on the left side, a double set of pouches on the back, and a pouch on the right, and it anchors a sword laced in a sheath on his back. Both hands hold a large, spiked club over his left shoulder. You should use a knife to scribe a line to emphasize the separation between the club and the head. The facial detail is not deeply done and may be lost if heavily painted. The head is covered by a helmet with spikes in all directions. Flash is between the legs and at the shoulders.

Figure #4 wears what appears to be a full shirt of metal armor, with chain mail on the arms and legs. His right arm also has jointed plates from shoulder to elbow. The mailed right hand grasps a curved



Hobgoblin Raiders (Alternative Armies)

sword pointed at the ground. His left arm holds a circular shield of wood with a metal plate and rivets. A belt holds a container behind the character's back. Goblinoid features are obvious, and the mouth is open in a scream of fury. His head is covered by a three-horned helm. The horns are uneven and have flash, and flash can be found between the figure's torso and arms.

The last figure appears to be wearing simple mail from shoulder to mid-thigh, with leggings, spiked knee pads, and high boots. The figure has a wide belt with a skull-shaped buckle, and a pouch is slung from his belt; his bare right arm clutches a machete-type sword. His left arm supports a buckler, and the left hand holds a knife. Little detail is on the hand knife or shield straps. The helmet has three horns, plus neck and cheek guards. The facial features are better than on the other figures.

These figures are not up to Ral Partha's or Grenadier's standards. At \$6.99 for a pack of five, they should be of better quality. They can be used for monsters in mixed sets of goblinoids, providing different poses.





"My Hero" set (Thunderbolt Mountain)



FANTASY WARRIORS* game (Grenadier Models)

Thunderbolt Mountain Miniatures

656 East McMillan
Cincinnati OH 45206-1991

Thunderbolt Mountain Miniatures

70 Harcourt Street
Newark, Nottingham
UNITED KINGDOM NG 241 R4

1011-"My Hero": Dragon, Knight, and Lady *** ½

Humorous miniatures can be center-pieces for collections, but a dual-purpose humorous diorama is especially rare. This

new lead piece from Thunderbolt falls into this category. This piece is set to 54-mm scale. The kit consists of 13 parts, the biggest of which is the oval base, which measures 115 mm by 75 mm. My casting had a mold line along the side, which needed to be removed and cleaned. The top of the base is shaped to represent rough, rocky ground and has most of the body of a fallen knight molded onto it. The knight's right hand clutches a bent sword; his left hand holds a battered shield, complete with bite and claw marks. The jerkin over his chain mail is ripped, and his legs, covered with plate, are splayed out. His head, with helmet and broken plume, is

upright, showing that it isn't yet good night for this knight. The knight's head and a pole that fits into a hole on the back of the oval are two other pieces of this set; the pole has an open set of manacles and the remains of rope on it—obviously where the lady was held prisoner.

The lady is a scantily clad 48-mm female wearing a string bikini bottom and bracelets. Care should be taken in cutting off the mold tab to avoid bending or breaking her feet. The tabs should be cut short; the depth can be determined by placing them in the holes next to the knight's head on the base. Muscle detail is good and anatomically correct. Detracting from this is the flash between the legs and a mold line that will require more than a light pass with a hobby knife. Her face is well done, with a perky, upbeat expression, and hair detail is good, dropping down in front to maintain decency. Her right hand is posed to touch the knight's plume, while her left hand pets the dragon.

The dragon consists of nine parts that form a good-sized figure. Its tail is bent to allow it to sit on the platform, but with careful planning you can bend the pieces to make the figure sit up straight whether on its base or off. The assembled dragon is close to 230 mm from nose to tail. Its left forepaw rests on the ground, and the right is curved to hug the female figure, as if posing for a trophy picture. Its long tongue hangs out, and you could swear it is grinning. The dragon needs some work, as some of the assemblies were loose and you will need putty to fill the joints. No mold lines were highly visible, and little flash was seen, except at the ends of the spine spikes.

I intend to use the dragon as a spare figure for my 25-mm collection and as part of the diorama scene. In all fairness, the miniature assembly in the picture here is rougher than usual. During one afternoon, this set was dropped four times because people wanted to see the cute scene. The fact it survived as well as it did speaks highly for it. It's a good buy at \$26.95.

Stan Johansen Miniatures

128 Barberton Road
Lake Worth FL 33467

JBR 20 Cossack Cavalry *** ½

By the time of the Boxer Rebellion, the Russian Empire was feeling its imperialistic oats. The czar dispatched Russian troops to many different places; these soldiers were frequently Cossacks, feared horsemen of the Russian plains who often served as the czar's crack troops and specialized enforcement arm.

This pack consists of 15 separate parts. Four of the pieces are cavalry sabers that must be glued to the figures as needed. Two bolt-action rifles can be glued so as to appear to be slung on the backs of the charging cavalymen, and a small rod can be added to a figure to make a rider into a

standard bearer. The figures wear identical uniforms: a long loose blouse, baggy pants, and high boots that end just below the knees. All wear bandoliers for spare cartridges. The facial detail is only fair, and its shallowness will require careful painting. The Cossacks high beret is clearly seen, but you will have to remove a mold line from it. The figures come in two poses: a charging figure with his right hand up for a sword or standard, and a figure firing from horseback to his left.

The horses also come in two poses: a galloping charge and a slow walk. The horses have fair detail, with clearly defined and thin reins, a thin saddle and blanket, and a rucksack over the neck. The tails are full, hanging out slightly on the galloping figure and down on the walking figure. The bases are rough ovals.

The set is a good buy, though the figures are too small for side-to-side fighting with RAFM-made figures. There is flash on some pieces, but at \$5 for a set of four, the price is right. These are recommended for GDW's SPACE: 1889* game or for colonial miniatures warfare.

That's it for this month. If you have any suggestions for this column, please contact me at: (708) 336-0790. I'll be there on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday from 2 P.M. to 10 P.M.; or on Saturday and Sunday from 10 A.M. to 5 P.M. You can also



Cossack Cavalry (Stan Johansen Miniatures)

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Photographed by Bodi

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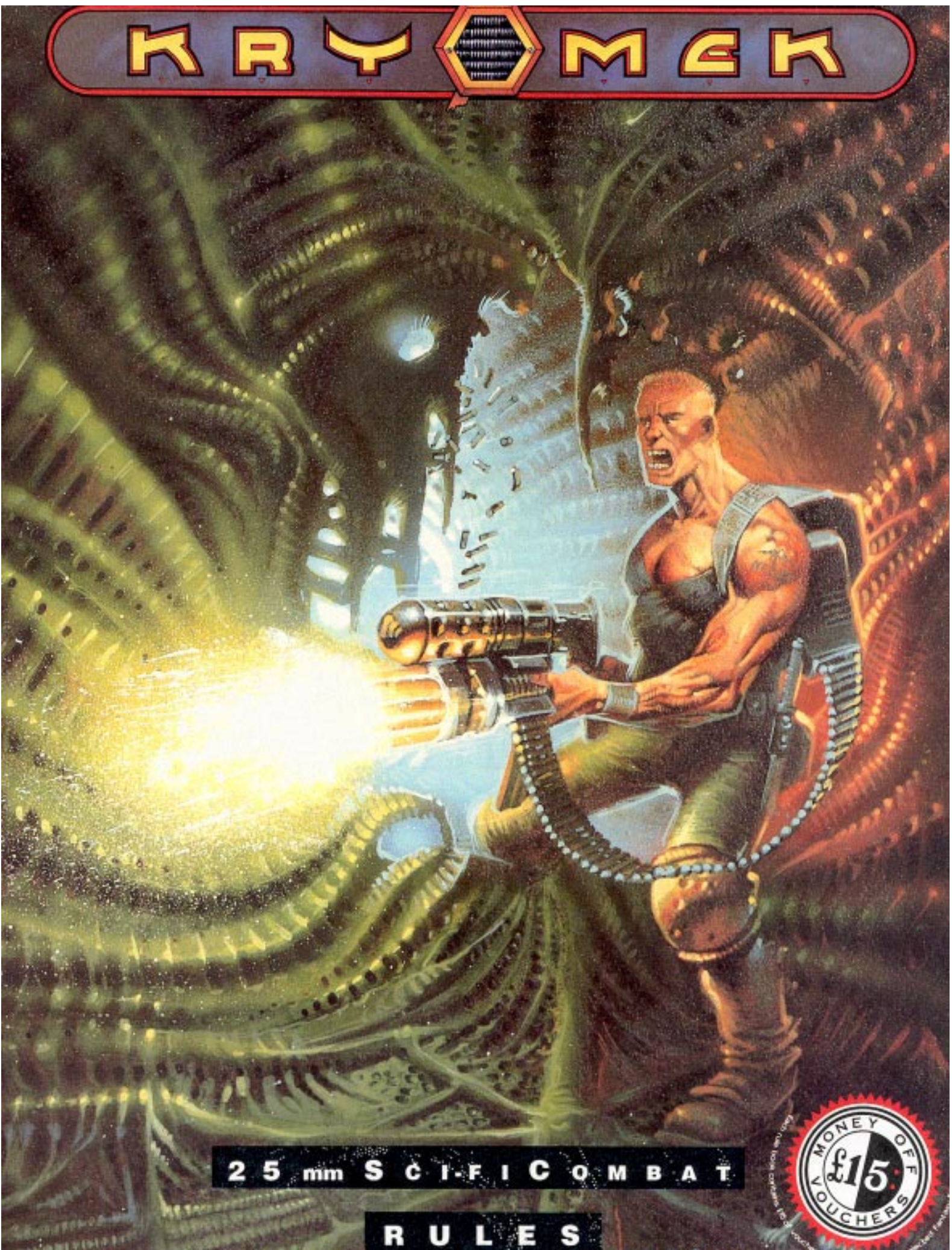
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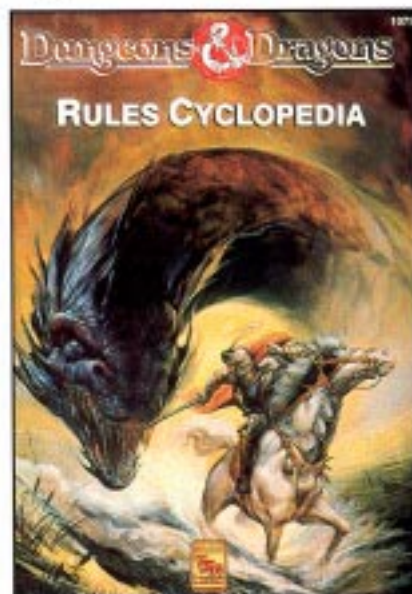
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